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China and the Geneva System

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THE present situation in China, with the grim possibility it affords of a war spreading across the whole of Asia, is yet another installment of the price we have to pay for the attempt to set up what is known as the Geneva system as the regulating principle in international affairs. Yet there is a great danger that we shall draw the wrong lessons. Already we are being told that if the League had acted in the Manchukuo dispute this further incursion of the Japanese armies would never have taken place; that the League has failed, not from its inherent weakness, but because it was afraid to use its limitless power to enforce its views.

The world's growing disorder is the greater, not the less, for being unaccompanied by the formalities of war. Indeed, the absence of these formalities, the determination of the great Powers to pretend that the fact of war cannot exist because the formalities have not been complied with, or because one of the parties does not, in the eyes of the lawyers, even exist, is

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adding every day to the risks of world-wide conflagration. There are in Europe, Asia, and Africa, and in each case in the very heart of the danger zone, Governments well established, and in two cases at least secure, which are not recognized as existing. The Italian African Empire, the Spanish Nationalist Government, and the Sino-Japanese Empire of Manchukuo are facts, just as surely as Poland is a fact, or the British Empire in India, or the Union of South Africa. We are apt, indeed, to forget how recent are all colonial frontiers and how unbroken the series of territorial readjustments even in Europe itself. The Great War was exceptional in its scale and in the opportunity it provided for the simultaneous adjustment of frontiers and the creation of new states. But if we take Europe, not in 1919, but in 1914, how many states were there whose frontiers went back even a hundred years? An analysis of the history of nation-states since the fifteenth century shows that the average period of stability for any nation is less than fifty years. It is also necessary to realize that this infinite capacity of the European system for adjustment and readjustment, for the alternate sub-division and aggregation of national territories, was the salvation of Europe from the dawn of the epoch of nationalism to the war of 1914.

The old empires collapsed in turn, and buried their high civilization in their own ruins, not because they lacked the power to govern or to unify, but because they never found a formula sufficiently elastic to enable a fresh balance to be struck from age to age between the claims of race and the need for government, between the right to freedom and the need for order. Once this is realized, we can begin to understand how the Geneva system, not as intended, but as recently interpreted and on one ill-fated occasion actually applied, is a retrograde, not a forward, movement. And in two vital respects. In so far as in 1918 the Powers adopted race as the sole criterion of national independence, they undermined the unique and sublime conception of European nationality, which was in its very essence not a concession to the claims of race but a compromise between the claims of race and the claims of government. In so far as the Powers subsequently proclaimed the frontiers of nation-states not merely inviolable by force but unalterable except by their own consent, which could be indefinitely withheld, they destroyed at its very foundation the European system, by depriving it of its principle of development. They created, albeit inadvertently, as I shall show, a situation in which the changes and adaptations necessary to the health of any system could only be effected by a challenge to the system itself. Europe, in other words, turned its back on the historical process and endeavored to become a theocracy, destined, in so far as it succeeded, to the swift decline which is the natural and inescapable doom of theocracies.

The parchment bonds by which it was proposed to achieve these strange but fatal ends were, of course, inadequate to the task. But the result has been to leave a yawning chasm between the world as the lawyers see it and the world as it is. This has led not merely to a technical but to an actual anarchy, which has brought us to the point where we are being asked in the name of peace, and even, absurdly enough, of progress, to substitute steel for parchment bonds, and enforce what is foolishly called "the rule of law" with a ruthless and bloodthirsty severity. Before examining how sane and responsible statesmen have been led to this disastrous point in the arguments of history it is worth while examining briefly the two arguments which lead very many of the public to sympathize, at least in theory, with the ambitions of those politicians who wish to recreate an armed League for the governance of the world.

The first argument – which has, I believe, the greatest appeal, if only to the subconscious mind – is the wholly fantastic argument from evolution. The argument is so absurd that it is difficult even to postulate it, but it runs something like this. The world has been evolving slowly from the family as the largest social unit through the tribal and city-state to the nation-state. The desire to "get together", the desire for a larger unity, is the underlying force which energizes the historical process. Today, in our infinite wisdom, we understand this fully for the first time, and we can assist, and indeed materially hasten, the process by our own actions. Every day and in every way we are getting bigger and better. The craze for communal life, for crowds, for vast amalgamations of businesses, is all part of the urge towards a new and all-embracing unity of creeds, classes, and races. It is all Progress, and nothing we can do can arrest it, for Progress is a Law of Nature. Shall we not, therefore, be wise and farsighted to assist it?

It is, of course, unnecessary to tell the readers of THE AMERICAN REVIEW that this is a farrago of nonsense, but it reflects a considerable volume of popular sentiment, and few indeed are those who can resist playing with this sentiment, at least on the political platform. Moreover, nonsense though it is, it is the kind of nonsense which it is hardest to answer, for reasons which the propagandists have discovered. The big lie is much harder to dispose of than the small lie. If you exaggerate the execution of twenty people during a civil war into a massacre of two hundred people you will be easily answered by a recital of the facts. People will feel it quite credible that in the anger and dismay arising from a number of executions (however justifiable) exaggerated reports should get into circulation, and they will readily agree that the numbers have been in fact grossly exaggerated. But if you announce a massacre of ten thousand people when there has been no shooting at all, people simply refuse to believe a denial. There must, they say, be something, and something pretty substantial, behind such a story.

So with the idea of historical evolution towards one great society. Actually, of course, the historical process is centrifugal, not centripetal. It is, like other evolutionary tendencies, from the simple to the complex, not from the complex to the simple. Culture arises not from unification but from an ever-increasing diversity, and from the clash of diversities. Civilization left to itself is, as Rivers said and proved, a watch that runs down. Colonization and conquest, absorption, sub-division, and reintegration are the normal and natural methods by which the political framework is kept in relationship with the ebb and flow of civilization, of energy and ability. There is no need to pursue here the fascinating inquiry as to the causes of these periodical flowerings of nations and races, the periodical harvests of energy and genius — now here, now there — which have given a name and color to so many different epochs. All that we can say with confidence is that these things have always happened, as they are happening in our own time; that no race or nation holds the front of the scene forever, or is forever banished from it. Some are corrupted by power; some energized by poverty; climatic and economic changes play their part and, even more surely, religious enthusiasms and revivals. Finally and most evidently, it is not in the vast loosely organized empires of race but in the small highly developed nation-states of mixed race that the highest civilization has always been developed. These fundamental laws of history must be forced somehow into the foreground of the general consciousness if much is not to be uselessly sacrificed on the altar of an illusion.

The other argument which infects the public mind with a subconscious sympathy with the aims of the new Genevan system concerns settlement by peaceful means. People see in the League an analogy with the government of their own state, and in quarrels between nations an analogy with disputes between capital and labor at home. These disputes, when men are wise, are settled between the two parties; when men are unwise or unjust, the State settles them, and, if necessary, throws its weight decisively into the scales to enforce its settlement. The error in this argument is simpler to expose. The precise fact which determines the boundaries of a nation-state is the size of the area over which there is a realized common interest. Directly you go outside that area, the "Government" not only does not but cannot settle anything except by force. By insisting, for instance, on the right of the English Government to settle disputes in the Irish Free State, you would not prevent disputes there; you would merely ensure that every dispute there was settled only by war. In other words, the analogy so popular on the platform and in the press is false, and its popularity is creating a public opinion ignorant of the realities of our situation. Since we are today largely governed by public opinion – which, of course, does not originate with the public but with these who control the Press – this ignorance is dangerous and must be dispelled.

To make people understand that it is as a direct consequence of the Genevan system that the world is on the brink of war is indeed a hard task, so long is the start which its advocates have had in the matter of propaganda. The Genevan system has for years called itself a "peace system", and thus the inference for simple-minded people was that those who opposed it were the enemies of peace. It is today specifically linked with the cause of democracy, though why an organization whose main supports include Kemal Ataturk, Stalin, and the Third International should enjoy such popularity among democrats is obscure. Finally, it stands for the rule of law, a principle which is in hard fact directly opposed to the principle of democracy, but which is nevertheless extremely popular, as a phrase, in democratic circles.

The correct approach to the task of creating an intelligent public opinion on the League issue is, I believe, to make people familiar first with the history of the drafting of the Covenant. It was originally neither as a peace system nor as a war system that the Genevan experiment was recommended to us. When we were first asked to support the League, the plea put forward for it was that it was a powerful piece of political machinery for reducing the risks of war; it was a characteristic Liberal device; it interposed, between the first emergence of a cause of dispute and the final arbitrament of war, a tangle of political machinery; the Council and the Assembly were to meet; commissions were to be appointed; witnesses were to be called; reports were to be issued; finally, and in any event, no recourse was to be had to arms within three months of the issue of the Council's recommendations.

It was assumed as axiomatic that this machinery, providing as it did for innumerable meetings of professional politicians before recourse could legally be had to hostilities, was foolproof. The highest wisdom must inevitably be the result of an indefinite series of discussions among an indefinite number of politicians lasting an indefinite length of time. The three months' delay interposed between the issue of the Council's "recommendations" for settling the dispute and their rejection by the aggrieved party was, on reflection, a humorous touch. If the recommendation was nebulous, biassed, or worthless, why not reject it at once? If it was clear, wise, and impartial, why not accept it at once? Cynics say today that this three months' provision was a stroke of genius on the part of the draftsmen of the Covenant; that they realized that no recommendation would ever be acceptable by both parties, but that they also realized that no

Government driven to war could possibly wait three months while the enemy perfected his preparations and searched for allies. By inserting the three-months clause the League insured, we are told, that every war which arose would be a war in defiance of the Covenant, and the Genevan system would thus be exempted from blame for what it provoked.

This theory is ingenious, but not, I fear, true. Underlying those clauses of the Covenant which embody what Sir Alfred Zimmern in his brilliant analysis calls "the Hague idea" (the idea of inquiry followed by conciliation) is the notion that full and free discussion, given enough freedom and enough fullness, was a cure for all political differences. The three-months interval was merely a precaution to provide, in the last resort, for still more discussion. Even if this naïve faith were not shared by all the Powers, it was reckoned far wiser to pretend to share it than to vote for the alternative proposals discussed at the Peace Conference. It was these *rejected* proposals which would have built the League around the now famous Article X, which is now alleged (wrongly) to guarantee the frontiers of all states.

This article reads today as follows (italics mine):

> ARTICLE X. The Members of the League *undertake to respect and preserve* as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all Members of the League. In case of any such aggression and in case of any threat or danger of such aggression the Council *shall advise upon* the means by which this obligation shall be fulfilled.

For reasons which I shall later make clear, we must bear in mind, with Article X, Article XIX:

> ARTICLE XIX. The Assembly *may from time to time advise* the reconsideration by Members of the League of Treaties which have become inapplicable and the consideration of international conditions whose continuance might endanger the peace of the world.

It is not generally known that the opposition to the proposal to build the League around Article X was led by England at the Peace Conference. Still less is it known that the Article in its present form was only accepted by Great Britain because the word "guarantee" was omitted, and because it was held not to be mandatory but to leave every nation free to take or to refuse to take the advice of the Council in the event of aggression. In this the British delegates were opposed by the American, who wanted a stronger Article X, with, however, provisions for peaceful change when altered circumstances made such changes just. The text of the American draft was as follows:

> The contracting Powers unite in several guarantees to each other of their territorial integrity and political independence, subject, however, to such territorial modifications, if any, as may become necessary in the future by reason of changes in the present racial conditions and aspirations, pursuant to the principle of self-determination, and as shall also be regarded by three-fourths of the delegates as necessary and proper for the welfare of the peoples concerned; recognizing also that all territorial changes involve equitable compensation and that the peace of the world is superior in importance and interests to questions of boundary.

But no one, not even M. Clemenceau, contemplated a mandatory Article X without the revision proposals of the American draft. Article X, if it is to be mandatory, must obviously be partnered by a mandatory Article XIX. The fact that Article XIX is permissive is proof positive of the intentions of the draftsmen in the matter of Article X.

The significance of the debates on Article X and of the rejection of the American draft is today greater than ever, for the American draft which was rejected represents, with the exception of a rather similar effort made by the Italian delegation, the only attempt ever made to make the Covenant an acceptable basis for the rule of law. The present text of Article X (admittedly ambiguous) and of Article XIX (which is anything but ambiguous) was not intended either to outlaw war or to make action against an aggressor compulsory. Still less was it intended to enshrine and apply to the international sphere the democratic principle of the majority vote; on the contrary, the League Covenant specifically insisted on the principle, within the League Council, of the Liberum Veto, the principle which for centuries had reduced the Polish Diet to futility. It was, however, attempted at one time by President Wilson and by the Italian delegation to lay down at least the foundations of a system of public law for the nations of the world. It was England's determination to resist this proposal, and to leave her hands free, which led to the ambiguous Article X and the inoperative Article XIX from which so many tragedies have arisen.

The next stage in the argument was the Kellogg Pact, of which the important articles are the following:

(1) The high contracting parties solemnly declare in the names of their respective peoples that they condemn

recourse to war for the solution of international controversies, and to renounce it as an instrument of national policy in their relations with one another.

(2) The high contracting parties agree that the settlement or solution of all disputes or conflicts of whatever nature or of whatever origin they may be, which may arise among them, shall never be sought except by pacific means.

This Pact was never linked up with the Covenant and cannot be read in conjunction with it. It is discreditable, but not curious, that in recent years no reference has been made in the Liberal Press to the Kellogg Pact. The use of military sanctions, so often advocated by Liberals, by a group of League states against a member nation is, of course, a clear and unqualified breach of the Kellogg Pact. Its terms are without reservation, and for a very good reason. The Covenant legalized war, and even invested it, in the eyes of those who mistake the results of the intrigues and wrangles of Versailles for the dictates of morality, with moral sanctions. Had the Pact laid an embargo on war "otherwise than permitted by the Covenant" it would have been a meaningless document. It was not intended to be anything of the kind. It was intended to put an end to power politics. Nor can quibblers argue that because military sanctions are not war they do not come within the scope of the Pact, for the Pact uses the term "except by pacific means" in place of the more usual expression. It is equally clear that economic sanctions may be a breach of the Pact, and not necessarily in the category of "pacific means".

It would be absurd to suggest that the Pact morally disentitles a member of the League to the remedies which the Covenant affords against an aggressive state. The morality of any action depends on the laws of God, and only in a strictly limited and secondary way on what an embarrassed politician may have been induced to sign as part of a political bargain in different circumstances. It is, however, perfectly obvious that the Kellogg Pact is either a pious declaration of intention to be read as such, or it is a binding pledge, in which case it is binding, in its own words, in regard to conflicts "of whatever nature or of whatever origin". In other words, if we take the view (in our opinion quite untenable) that these documents, the Covenant and the Pact, have a sanction in morals, we are no more entitled to make ourselves an exception to the Pact in the matter of military sanctions than Italy was entitled to make herself an exception to the Covenant in the matter of her use of force less than three months after the Council's Report on Ethiopia.

The plain fact is that the attempt by Mr. Kellogg and M. Briand to introduce a positive principle of public law into the Genevan system introduced so much as to stultify the whole system at one blow. It delegalized war, but in so doing it delegalized the whole of the rest of the Covenant. Nothing, in effect, was left but an inviolable *status quo* to be modified only by consent. This suited the French, and to some extent the British, though the latter were careful to include such reservations as made their signature meaningless* (despite a characteristic plea from the international lawyers that their signature to the Pact itself renders their reservations meaningless, which may be good law but is certainly bad sense). It suited very few other people, however, and since the signature of the Pact England, Germany, Italy, Abyssinia, Bolivia, Paraguay, Russia, China, and Japan have all employed force, or the threat of force, to influence the outcome of disputes with other states, while all the nations which have debated the use of military sanctions have contemplated measures "other than pacific".

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* His Majesty's Government in Great Britain "accept the new treaty upon the distinct understanding that it does not prejudice their freedom of action" in respect of "certain regions of the world, the welfare and integrity of which constitutes a special and vital interest".

There are those who will at this point get impatient and who will express their impatience in these terms. France and Great Britain, they will say, have in fact kept the peace; they have not resorted to war; they have kept their engagements. Italy, Japan, and Germany have not. The rest is pure technicality. Britain and France are "the good companions" of international politics; the other Powers are the rogue elephants who must be chained. This objection has much less force than appears, particularly in regard to Germany and Japan. Great Britain did not object to the actions of Germany in the Rhineland and of Japan in China (on the occasion of the invasion of Manchukuo) on moral or even on political grounds, but on purely legalistic grounds. She frankly admitted in both cases that the *status quo* was illogical and inadmissible. She complained, not of the objects sought by these Powers, but of the manner in which they sought them. Her complaints, in other words, were technical, and the moral justification of her technical complaints can be tested only by her own observance of technicalities. Yet Great Britain forced economic sanctions on the League by a majority vote, in defiance of the plain interpretation of the Covenant, and backed up her actions by a new interpretation of that document, under which a breach of Article X placed all the members of the League automatically at war with the aggressor.

It was perfectly well known to all the Governments of Europe that the British Government had refused, at Versailles, to accept the mandatory word "guarantee" in the article and had not then regarded the article in its final form as depriving any member of freedom of action. It was equally obvious that if the new interpretation of the article was correct, it must have been correct at the time of the Vilna dispute and at the time of the Manchurian dispute. Britain chose to assert this interpretation, which was new and surprising, only when she had shown the world that she considered her own interests threatened. When, at the eleventh hour, she felt it desirable to make a gesture of fair-mindedness, she could do no better than to make an undefined offer of sharing the economic resources of undeveloped countries. This offer may have been sincere, but, seeing that the Italians themselves had asked for a pledge to this effect to be inserted in the Covenant, and that Britain had refused even to discuss it, and that she had again blocked the same proposal when made by the Italians at Geneva in 1926, her gesture could hardly have been accepted at its face value by Signor Mussolini.

The plain fact is that Article X, if more than a pious expression of opinion, is not compatible either with the rest of the Covenant or with that national sovereignty which the rest of the Covenant implies and acknowledges. If, moreover, Article X is mandatory, it is indefensible unless and until Article XIX (regarding the revision of treaties and of frontiers), which was deliberately separated from Article X at the insistence of the British and French delegates at Versailles, is also mandatory. Without a mandatory Article XIX, Article X as now interpreted means the rule of law without any provision for amending the law. This is the technique, not of democracy, not of limited monarchy, not even of absolute monarchy, but of theocracy. For it must be noted that Article XIX as drafted makes any changes in the *status quo* not merely improbable but impossible, since universal consent is necessary. There is not even behind this article the possibility of effecting changes by force, since no sanctions can be applied to a state which refuses its consent to change, even if the whole of the League be unanimous as against that state.

The rule of law in common parlance means, of course, the exact opposite of what would be set up if the now official view of the meaning of Article X of the Covenant were imposed on the world. On domestic political platforms, by the "rule of law" is meant the right to make changes in the law by majority vote and to insist on such changes being accepted if they are made in a customary and conventional way. We say that there is no need in democratic countries of revolutions and rebellions because the citizens are free to legislate, and because the changes made by legislation are accepted by the people since they have the right to make further changes if the experiment fails. It is a piece of gross and cynical dishonesty to recommend the Geneva system to the democratic publics on the ground that it means "the rule of law" when in fact it means setting up a system exactly and precisely the opposite to that which we describe as the rule of law in their own countries If democracies had the rule of law as it is proposed to apply it at Geneva, they would have only a Statute-book, the police, and the Army; their citizens would have to obey the laws they had, or be shot. And if to such a Constitution a clause were appended saying that a subject who had a grievance against the Government could bring it before the Government, and that any class which had a grievance against any other class could bring it to the notice of the representatives of that class, and that the grievance would be attended to if the authors of the grievance agreed, should we be greatly reassured?

Of course, until the rearmament of Germany and the renascence of Italy no one in England would have ventured to suggest that the League should be regarded as an armed organization for defending the existing distribution of territory and resources among the Great Powers. England entered the League honestly with the hope of assisting its development into a political instrument for effective conciliation. It was recommended at the start precisely as an instrument for securing a peaceful revision by diplomatic pressure of the very treaties whose provisions are now called sacrosanct. So far, however, from securing amendment of the treaties, the League even failed to secure the fulfillment of the one clause in the treaties which was in Germany's interest – the clause relating to disarmament. This was not England's fault, perhaps, but she should have seen the inevitable consequences. Perhaps she did. In any case, England has done her best to bring them about. The League is today in ruins, and for no purpose. If England had destroyed the League in her efforts for justice, she could at least regard her handiwork with complacency. Instead, England first watched its disintegration, and then proceeded to use the form, when the substance was gone, in order to enforce against the Powers who had lost the peace the instrument which she had planned to use as their safeguard. And all this out of sheer inadvertence. England had changed her views about the Powers who lost the peace, and the instrument of the League, and of Article X, seemed too good to be overlooked. After all, the English say, treaties are treaties; covenants are covenants; and when they work out so well for England, does that do more than prove that God, as always, is a good Englishman?

That, I believe, represents the view of the average Englishman today about the League, and I for one should not quarrel so bitterly with his view were it not that it will lead inevitably to war. However great England may be, or deserve to be, she cannot arrest the process of history. She is asking the world to accept the present situation as permanent for all time. To evade this issue by saying that England is ready to amend it by consent is merely dishonest. If a nation has only to refuse to change its policy or its boundaries in order to retain them — and that is the position under the League today — there can be no peaceful change. We can only hope for peaceful changes, as opposed to changes by force or the threat of force, by rebuilding the League on the sound foundations of commonly accepted principles, and in this way substituting morality for politics as the basis of its decisions. In this way a majority decision will have that sanction which alone is binding on the consciences of free men. This involves one of two things. You must either start with an omnicompetent League limited to the Powers who genuinely agree on all questions of political principle, or with a universal League limited in its jurisdiction to those matters about which its members are agreed. On the one basis, progress will consist of the gradual adherence to the League of more and more states; on the other, of the gradual increase of the number of matters over which the League has jurisdiction.

Britain's belief that, being herself tired and no longer energetic, she can construct a system of law to defend her power and dominion for all time against the forces of change is vain and dishonorable. Only by making her own contribution to the changing pattern of history can Britain ensure that the pattern will contain her within the framework. She can make her contribution by an act of will or by an act of resignation, but she must be a responsible partner in the historical process if she is, as a world Power, to continue to exist. If Britain wishes to stand by the League, her task is to make the League an effective agent for just change. On no other terms has it a future.

But if she decides on this policy, she must realize at the outset that an effective agent for just change must first of all, as a prerequisite, be universally regarded as disinterested. In our lifetime the League will never be so regarded. Its record is too bad. It will only regain the world's confidence very gradually. For this reason it is evident that the path of progress lies not with the omnicompetent League with a limited membership — for such a League would today only be the old Triple Entente in a new guise, and would provoke a counter-league — but with the universal League limited in its scope and responsibilities.

This may seem a dull end to a noble adventure, but the answer to that lies here. The adventure ceased to be noble when League members began saying "peace" when they meant "war". An armed League to defend the territories of France, Russia, and Britain, who between them own more than three-fifths of the world's surface, is not a noble adventure, but a rather ignominious intrigue. A League of receivers turned policemen would arguably be practical, but it would certainly not be regarded as noble if its first aim were to secure a legal title for its own dubiously acquired assets, and its second to make its own consent a condition to the acquisition of similar assets by anyone else.

If there is a moral quality in democracy, in toleration, and in liberty, England can only pride herself on possessing it if she really withholds the hand of friendship from all those who lack these qualities. She cannot make friends of one dictator and denounce the others for their dictatorship. England taught the whole world during the last century that freedom means the freedom of those we dislike as well as of those we like; that rights are absolute, and that justice is impartial. Then she practised what she preached. Today she does not. She uses law and morality as the tools of her political trade, but she only appeals to them when it suits her. The result is that the other nations do the same, and the world is divided into two camps of self-righteous people hurling moral imprecations at each other – sometimes with a complete sincerity, more often with a transparent hypocrisy.

The plain lesson is that England can defend the *status quo* in Europe or Asia on no conceivable ground except that of morality and law. You cannot suddenly invest the acquisitions of power-politics with the sanction of morality, or condemn the principles of power-politics without condemning the title-deeds which descend from these principles. These things may be hard to learn, but the world has got to learn them if the foundations of a new world order are to be laid otherwise than in blood.

The observed facts tell us that the need of the world is for peace and order, and the major political problem is to provide them without denying the opportunity for free change. Any fool can preserve the superficial appearances of peace and order by force, until someone brings greater force against him. But as at home, so abroad, there must be some self-regulating principle to combine the realities of peace and order with the possibilities of change. That principle must be founded on the laws of God, and not on the laws of man.

England, for instance, has known four invasions and three conquests. Isolated, she would be today where the Abyssinians are, or the tribes of the Northwest Frontier. Who is she to arrest the process of history and to seek to turn the world into a museum of static and isolated cultures condemned to slow but inevitable decay? Is Italy to remain forever crowded and poor and Abyssinia lawless and under-populated because a lawyer compromised over a draft in a treaty in 1919? And if the English shift their ground and say that the Italians are not good colonizers, let us remember that the Pope said the same of the English in the sixteenth century. Spain was then the colonizing nation; then the Dutch; then England; and then the French. Nations, like individuals, have their exits and their entrances. This is the economy of Nature. One succeeds another as heir to the task of the pioneer. The curve of fertility points the finger of destiny. That, too, is the lesson of sociology.

Which brings us back to the present situation in Shanghai and North China. The present conflict arises, as so many wars have arisen from the dawn of history, from the proximity of a vast empire in confusion with a small, vigorous, and highly organized state suffering from the pressure of population. No power on earth could ever have solved this problem by consent. No power on earth could ever have solved it at all without re-drawing the map of Asia, and that is a power which Asia will never concede to Europe, any more than Europe would concede it to Asia in regard to the frontiers of the European states. Yet similar problems have been settled in past times, without a world war. If the signatories to the Nine-Power Pact had made a pact of interference instead of one of non-interference, peace and rough justice might long since have reigned from Turkestan to the Pacific. Unfortunately, the shadow of Article XIX hung over the Washington Conference; there must be no positive action for peace and justice, or even in defense of the barest decencies of civilization. At the same time the shadow of the dubious and ill-drafted Article X sent China away contented to resume her endless civil wars. Her frontiers were secure. She could do what she liked within them.

That may have been the lesson to be drawn from the Covenant. It was not, and never will be, the lesson of history.

Where Are the Laymen?

A Study in Policy-Making

Donald Davidson

NOWADAYS all but the most insensitive persons feel that they live under the shadow of an impending crisis. Stirred by the few shreds of free will left us by the strange organization of modern society which is in essence a form of disorganization, we assume that ability to foresee the crisis ought to imply ability to avert it, or at least to be prepared for it. But we do not, as citizens, act upon this assumption. We only wait, hoping for the best, fearing the worst.

What indeed can we do? How can the individual check in the slightest degree, much less direct, the remorseless stream of causation? The new form of Calvinism has done its work well: under economic determinism we feel ourselves to be impotent predestined creatures, to be saved or damned by uncontrollable forces. When the flux of events has reached a certain stage, we can vote. But often it is too late to vote. The choice may be not between a good and an evil, or between two goods, but between two evils. We can think of certain particular things that need remedy, but have no general instructions to give the government. Even the smallest acts of social control threaten to pass from individual hands. We cannot even stop the handbill distributors from leaving their hideous bargain-broadsides to blow about our porches and lawns. All we can do is to pick up after them.

Liberty of prevention is gone. Liberty of complaint is going. We are afraid to write letters to the newspapers. Any daring act of independence that has a social purpose may bring retaliation upon us. The employer may discharge us, the labor union may blacklist or bomb us, the professional association may rebuke or disbar us, or our clients, alarmed or provoked by our exhibition of personal opinion, may fall away, the "administration" may "drop" us from the faculty. And the Press – the guardian of liberty? The Press knows how to lynch us, in clever legal ways, if it finds us publicly committed anywhere; or even if it is not hostile, it may still make our lives a blazing torture of "publicity". Therefore, as citizens, we play safe; we try to be inconspicuous; we lie low. We rarely act openly in a general capacity, we never "preact", we only re-act.

But since public policies, ostensibly in the general interest, must be formed somehow, the function we abdicate falls into other, eager hands. It becomes specialized or professionalized, like everything else. Under modern American conditions the function of policy-making (for that is the new word for it!), which used to rest with the lay citizenry, is now exercised mainly by two agents: pressure groups and the government itself. The pressure groups, whether they be business, political, religious, or racketeering, invariably are spokesmen for special and private interests. To the frightened individual, anxious for amendment of this or that, pressure groups give both the safeguard of anonymity and the sense of solidarity and power. They are our substitute for genuine public opinion, and they range all the way from political lobbies to journalistic claques. (Such devices as the American Institute of Public Opinion do not express a really active, initiating public opinion; they are barometers for guessing at the popularity of policies already made.)

The obvious danger of pressure groups as policy-making agencies lies in their special interest which is so easily disguised as a general interest. They may not only deceive the public into thinking that some specific form of salvation for labor or agriculture is a generally valid salvation for all America, but they also doubtless deceive the members of the pressure groups themselves, since they produce the illusion of really effective public activity even while they drive segments of the public farther and farther apart in understanding and make it ever more difficult to discern how special interests can be reconciled or what the general interest really is.

Then there is the government — especially the vastly enlarged Federal government. It stands between the special interests, which are highly vocal, peremptory, and concrete, and the general interests, which are non-vocal and can be only vaguely defined under modern conditions. If this government is a Coolidge or a Hoover administration, it solves its problems by hastily declaring a few of the special interests to be general interests, and so embarks upon an irresponsible career. If it is a Roosevelt administration and feels (as I think the Roosevelt administration does feel) a strong responsibility to define and conserve the general interest, then it must keep the special interests at bay somehow, yielding a point here and beating down opposition there, while it thinks up the policies that ought to have been formulated and voted on before it came, as a government, to the point of action.

If such an administration is successful, as the Roosevelt administration has been, in placating or at least checking the special interests, it is then irresistibly tempted to assume an ever-enlarging rôle as a policy-maker. It begins to tell the public what the public is supposed to be thinking. It proposes not only to act in the general interest but to create the general interest anew. In so far as the Roosevelt administration has moved in this direction, it has assumed a somewhat revolutionary cast. For if a government not only interprets public opinion but proposes to implant it and shape it, that government has taken the final step toward what we used to call paternalism. It no longer "represents" in the old democratic sense, but "presents", or pre-thinks, in the original Latin meaning of the word. It thinks for us before we ourselves have thought.

II

Such ideas as these — not necessarily mine, except as I may have expanded or embroidered them — are set forth by Mr. Francis Pickens Miller in an unostentatious but in many ways a remarkable little book entitled *The Blessings of Liberty*.* Most of the reviewers of this book have paid deserved attention to its survey of the state of the nation, its discussion of liberty as meaningless without economic security, its temperate analysis of the good and bad in the Roosevelt administration. They have paid little attention to certain less obvious features — for instance, Mr. Miller's expressed readiness to see regionalism used as one of the political instruments for rejuvenating the democratic process. But even this new willingness, not too common among American political scientists, is not the most important item in Mr. Miller's study of the blessings of liberty. His own main interest, we can be practically certain, is in the processes that direct and inform government; more particularly, in the possibilities of developing an ordered, watchful, purposeful public opinion which can find its way into action. He wants a revival of statesmanship among laymen as well as among politicians. If it will not revive of itself, he will seek methods of artificial respiration. In reviewing the situation he says:

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* THE BLESSINGS OF LIBERTY *by Francis Pickens Miller*. (UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA PRESS. 105 pp. $1.00).

> The practice of democracy assumes a quality of life equal to the demands made upon citizens under a democratic constitution. It assumes affirmative answers to twin questions: is a sufficient body of citizens capable of thoughtful and responsible relationship to national policy, and is a sufficient body of citizens capable of an active and responsible relationship to the nation's wealth?

The record shows, says Mr. Miller, a growing irresponsibility. Among the downtrodden many, who under Jeffersonian doctrine ought to be the court of last appeal, Huey Long, Father Coughlin, Dr. Townsend, Gerald Smith, and others, all "irresponsible" persons, have been the shapers of opinion. Their grand simplifications would set the delicate mechanism of the modern state off-center entirely. For though that mechanism can absorb a good deal without undue disturbance (stock-market gambling, high finance, etc., etc.), it cannot absorb folk-movements of "irresponsible bodies" such as these persons would lead. But people at the top, of the few if not invariably the wellborn, such as the Liberty Leaguers and "other less publicized committees of big business", are no less "irresponsible" in shaping public opinion and in "falsifying the underlying assumptions of democracy".

In the "middle group – the political yeomanry" Mr. Miller discovers some healthy growth of responsibility under the New Deal, particularly where regional set-ups were enforced by circumstances, as in agriculture. Volunteer committees have done good work here and there, and individuals have had some part in forming policy. But good though all that is, it is not good enough.

To judge the quality of the democratic process under the New Deal, however, it is necessary to look at private provisions for the expression of initiative as well as those governmentally encouraged. In the absence of private activities, the tendency would be for the executive, through its administrative branches, to arrange the generation of its own mandate. Where the government has to recruit interest in the problems of government, liberty is on the wane, and on the wane less because the government is assuming new functions than because the citizens are not exercising old ones.

"Private provisions for the expression of initiative" – that is what Mr. Miller is most interested in. He is encouraged to find many such "private provisions" actually showing signs of life at the very moment when Mr. Roosevelt's government threatens to professionalize the formation of public opinion and make us all ashamed of our amateurishness if we dare to venture a private opinion upon a public matter. Mr. Miller seems to think that private minds are awakening slowly to public interests in much the same way as our forefather's minds bestirred themselves, timidly at first, then with gathering conviction, just before the Revolution of 1776. "Forums, radio forums, discussion groups, use of the mass of popularly written pamphlets on economic and social subjects which has made its appearance in the last few years, all reflect a popular concern for the state of the nation that characterized the last quarter of the eighteenth century and the middle years of the nineteenth century, but has been almost unknown in America for the past three generations."

But though this is much, it is still not enough. If American citizens would adhere to "policy-making groups" in sufficient numbers and with real intelligence and conviction, they would have a profound effect upon the operations of government. They would "validate the underlying assumptions of democracy". But there is no assurance in Mr. Miller's book that this has happened. Only a few modest sentences give us a hint that something may yet be done to furnish the government with the criticism and instruction which a government ought to have from its citizens.

> First steps have recently been taken over considerable areas [writes Mr. Miller] toward giving democracy a local habitation. The course of the movement during the next few years will determine America democratic destiny. The race is on between the national development

of a political process and the national development of a political machine.

In Mr. Miller's book the point is undeveloped, as modesty would require that it be. Mr. Miller is, in fact, an interested party in that race. He has entered it on the side of "the national development of a political process". For three years he has actively sponsored a method of "policy-making" which has enlisted the support of a number of people. He has entered the field of action as *amicus populi.* He is the founder, or one of the chief founders, of a "People's Lobby". That is to say, Mr. Miller is the chief organizer, as he is also secretary, of two organizations which are in essence one organization: The Southern Policy Committee and the National Policy Committee.

III

The history of these organizations is only now in the making, and is not fully known to me or, I dare say, to anybody except Mr. Miller and a few others. I give what information I have with the sole purpose of setting up an outline which will serve as a basis for critical discussion. For, if the "policy groups" organized by Mr. Miller are really going to have the profound effect upon our national life that their sponsors intend, then they, no less than our all-too-designing national government, must invite some critical scrutiny.

In the autumn of 1935, when the Roosevelt administration was just beginning to pass from "emergency" legislation to more expansive projects, Mr. Miller visited a number of Southern cities. At that time he was still, I believe, secretary of the Foreign Policy Association, an organization formed shortly after the World War, with the expressed purpose of furnishing American citizens with accurate information concerning foreign affairs. Somehow or other (though all this was vague) we who listened to Mr. Miller got the impression that foreign affairs had passed beyond the stage when information, from no matter how able a secretariat, could be of major importance; or at any rate domestic affairs had become of more pressing concern.

Mr. Miller is a Virginian, and very persuasive. We listened to his appeal with eagerness and not a little hope as he outlined a plan for a new kind of "program-making". I say *we*, meaning to indicate a discussion group that had grown up in my own city, as in many other Southern cities, when the dark and clamorous urgencies of the Great Depression forced many persons to gather, for the first time in their lives, in order to discuss matters economic and political. Mr. Miller was seeking out and visiting such groups. He found them to be extraordinarily active all over the South. And he was inviting them, for a trial period of a year, to become "Southern Policy Groups", to adopt a uniform line of discussion of Southern and national issues, and at the end of the period to send delegates to a conference, at which, if possible, the discussion would head up in a synthesis of views – in effect, a declaration of what policies, economic and social, would be best for the South. Seemingly, the Foreign Policy Association, operating through Mr. Miller, would act, for the time being as unofficial secretariat, and would furnish pamphlets and monographs to aid study of important questions.

Nobody was committed, or expected to be committed to particular views. The main object was nothing more than systematic inquiry and discussion. As the minutes of the 1935 Conference stated, the views of the South "have often been represented by exclusive economic interests on the one hand or political sensationalists on the other". But now, the *amici populi* were to be heard from. The policy groups, to quote again from the minutes, sought to "present the considered views of still different and, it is hoped, more general elements of opinion in the Southern states in regard to national problems". Behind the discussions there lay no selfish or sectional purpose, but only the idea "that tenable opinions in regard to public questions in the complicated age in which we live cannot be adequately formulated until after a consideration of the facts as compiled and synthesized by impartial research agencies". Impartial, adequate knowledge based upon expert research, devotion to the general interest – of these things were emphasized again and again, both in the work of the policy groups and in the first annual conference. We were also encouraged to think – and perhaps many did not need much encouragement to think – that somebody must be ready with carefully formulated general policies against the time when the Roosevelt administration might be dragged to ruin by its own opportunism and lack of a considered philosophy – or might be dispossessed by the War Lords of Big Business or the gathering hosts of Huey Long, who was then still very much alive.

Such purposes seemed noble, and not beyond practical accomplishment. They must still seem so to the increasing number of able and interested persons who have engaged in the work of the policy groups and have extended their field of operations. The first conference of policy groups, held in Atlanta in April, 1935, established a permanent organization, known as the Southern Policy Committee, with H. C. Nixon of Louisiana as chairman and Mr. Miller as secretary. The second conference, held in Chattanooga in 1936, indicated pretty clearly that in numbers and vigor the movement was growing. But beyond this regional activity lay a national sphere. A National Policy Committee was formed in June, 1935, with Richard F. Cleveland of Maryland as chairman and Mr. Miller, again, as secretary. The establishment of the large organization seems to indicate that the Southern policy groups represented a regional experiment, upon the model of which the national organization, working with the same methods and aims, could be built. The National Policy Committee, at this writing, has about a dozen state and local committees organized and functioning, chiefly in the Eastern half of the United States. At least as many more are in process of organization; and undoubtedly the movement is expected to cover, through its various foci of interest, the entire Unted States.

But this does not mean, of course, that the policy groups — or committees — expect to influence public affairs through their votes, or even, if we may accept their frank statement of purposes and methods, through "propaganda". They are to be a leaven of public opinion rather than a direct force to shape it. The policy groups intend to "mobilize intelligence" rather than to get votes for specific measures. They aim to make it difficult for the democratic process to be destroyed by an unofficial *coup d'état* engineered (perhaps over the course of years rather than by a single stroke) by the official government itself. They wish to supply the good counsel that the decadence of our political parties has all but made an impossibility. To quote their "objectives", they propose to establish Committees (including people of varying schools of thought) which will "serve as centers of political discussion" and will "prepare themselves for intelligent political action". But they expect to influence the *tone* of the public mind rather than to seize command of it for some particular program. They are, in short, physicians of the body politic rather than political leaders. They wish to restore us all to political health, and otherwise to let us decide our fate for ourselves. They are not a party – or at any rate, not yet.

IV

The scheme is public-spirited and ambitious, it aims at the highest, we wish it well, for it may do some real good. . . . What more is there to say about it? A great deal more, surely, if we are willing to look behind the aims, so evidently high-minded and carefully directed, and to consider the practical operations of the National Policy Committee, or, in a field where I am more immediately acquainted, of the Southern Policy Committee. But first it might be well to think of these Committees only as a phenomenon, a portent, a sign of the times. One's judgement of them will then depend upon temperament and point of view.

If the critic is an optimist, the Committees will seem like an answer to a democrat's prayer. He can tell himself that, though we are sunken, we are not so far sunken that the instinct for free discussion is dead beyond resurrection. It is alive again, and among the very best people – those who sooner or later, by precept or example, by direct persuasion or subtle indirect temper, finally create public opinion – or at least make an atmosphere favorable to its creation and healthy exercise. The Committees will then seem to illustrate the long-lasting, ever-reviving genius of the English-speaking people for taking an interest in their own affairs – for being impressed about things-in-general (as the French cannot, or the Italians, Russians, Germans, *et alii*) and for improvising, overnight, a new method of governing or getting at the government. The Policy Committees, under this view, will resemble the Committees of Correspondence which played such an active and intelligent part in preparing the way for the American Revolution; which were ready with ideas and schemes when all the dullards were a-wool-gathering; which may be said, indeed, to have educated the personnel that not only achieved independence but set up a Republic unique in character and vitality.

These are glowing thoughts. If the ability of the Committees be equal to their zeal, why should they fail? How glorious to think of the Spirit of '76 as again abroad, with pamphlet and mimeograph, with letters, and committees, and conferences, if not with fife and drum! This is the Optimist's view, and I can see no reason to hold it in contempt if it seems a little heroical. We have been too long without heroics. We are dying for somebody to tell us to act for duty rather than for cash.

But the unheroical or pessimistic view is equally convincing. As a sign of the times, the Policy Committees will seem to the Pessimist like a species of Counter-Revolution that has got under way too late to accomplish results. For the Revolution is not ahead of us – it is already behind us, and is not the sort of Revolution that democratic methods are capable of countering. When a strong Federal government, under modern conditions, once gets committed, over and above its old functions, to the rôle of guardian for all economic interests and active promoter of social well-being, it can pay no more attention to the "policy-making" of such committees than a chain grocery store can afford to listen to a public forum on what potatoes are worth. An economic government is tied to its economic motives and performance just as surely as a merchant is tied to the compulsion of profit-making. And under an economic government citizens become bystanders – consumers to be served, to whom the fiction of deference must be maintained; their opinions do not matter so long as they continue to buy goods – *i.e.*, pay taxes. The government, says the Pessimist, creates its own policies because it must; it must, because that is the only way in which it can manipulate the economic system successfully and at the same time placate the special groups whose "policies", if listened to, would throw everything into contradiction and make manipulation impossible.

Since all this is true, the Pessimist argues, the Policy Groups can never succeed. They may discuss all they please, but they will arrive nowhere. They should be grateful if the government allows them just to discuss – they ought not to expect it to listen, except as they may occasionally serve some purpose as bodies of experts, capable of rendering specific advice. Above all, the very fact that they are elevating "policy-making" into a system proves that the function itself has lost its general quality, is no more common property even among the educated, and might as well, therefore, pass altogether out of private and untrained hands into the keeping of the true specialists in policy-making: the government.

The oppositeness of these two views is distressing. It is discouraging to think that both judgements are plausible, that both would find adherents in the ranks of our best citizenry. That condition – the remarkable plausibility of quite opposite judgements – is also a sign of the times, indicating, among other things, the difficulties in the way of discussion groups. It is probably not easy to find a golden mean between these two *a priori* views. The common American, or pragmatic, course is better. The practical operation is the thing to consider.

Looking at the matter from the pragmatic standpoint, then, let us set down the active and cogent reasons for considering the Policy Committees a device of some importance and perhaps of considerable merit in our time.

(1) The Policy Committees are the only device so far suggested for enlisting intelligent citizens in a form of public service that is not itself public office. All other organizations tend to have a bias in some special direction and are too readily drawn into partisan action. Nobody represents the public as a public.

And if all other interests are organized, why not an organization in the public interest simply? — a clearing-house for general ideas which, however good, however noble, are likely under modern conditions to fail in dissemination simply because there is no organized force to "put them over". The scheme is carefully planned. By constituting itself a clearing-house for ideas and selecting its personnel with care it escapes the dangers that inhere in special doctrines and programs. At the very least it does two things: it acquaints a considerable group of key-men, potential molders of thought, with facts relating to public issues; and it draws, in turn, upon a wide variety of talent, much of which otherwise might be lost to public service. The Policy Committees are an active realization of the so-called need of humanizing knowledge. In times as complex and critical as our times are, such work is necessary. The more laymen can be induced to participate in it, the better off the country is.

(2) The actual service already rendered, in making accessible the results of research, is in itself of highest importance. It is a public information service which neither newspapers and magazines, nor libraries and publishers, nor even educational institutions can for obvious reasons give in such form as to become immediately useful in public affairs. The time element must be considered. We cannot wait for the conclusions of specialists to filter slowly down to the rank and file, and then up again to Congress and the President.

In publishing and disseminating pamphlets, brief news-letters, copies of congressional bills, reports on the progress of state and Federal legislation, the Policy Committees have already put important fractions of the public into immediate touch with two spheres – the sphere of facts and ideas and the sphere of action. The Policy Committees know both what the government is doing and what the experts are finding out.

(3) The Policy Groups put into active communication widely separated individuals and groups who have a similar type of interest in the public welfare even though they may have divergent views concerning it. They thus strengthen morale, if only among a selected few, and give a sense of concerted effort and opportunity for interchanging views. Despite the development of "modern communications", ideas do not pass readily from group to group, in one region or several; they must first go through a central station (the press, radio, party machines) and then be imposed upon the passive recipients. The Policy Groups replace this passivity with activity and mutuality. They afford a cross-traffic of ideas. They short-circuit the central "conditioning" station. Furthermore, they not only bring together groups – they associate, or aim to associate, within the groups themselves, different classes and callings. They propose to seat the business man beside the labor leader, the farmer beside the broker and politician.

(4) Last, the Policy Groups, even within the short span of their experimental operation, have already demonstrated a certain effectiveness in getting real issues into public discussion and in securing action. The 1935 conference of Southern groups, for example, agreed unanimously on one (and only one) particular item of policy: the desirability of Federal legis-

lation to help farm tenants to become farm-owners. On this issue the Southern Policy Groups became a lobby, and used the technique of a lobby, sending telegrams and letters and designating members to appear at committee hearings, and otherwise endeavoring to influence the course of legislation. It is possible that the final passage of the Bankhead-Jones Farm-Tenant Bill was due in some measure to their efforts. Within state boundaries, too, there has been some effective action by local groups: or at least it may be said that, in such states as Alabama and Arkansas, legislative bodies and public officials have been made conscious of new voices speaking in public affairs. But the evidence of such activity whether in nation or in state, is too scattered and uncertain, to base generalizations upon. The sponsors of the policy groups would probably not boast of their effectiveness in action, but would warn against hasty action, on the ground that they are interested more in a restoration of the democratic process than in actual lobbying and political pressure.

V

All the evidence bearing on the rôle of the policy groups is, indeed, similarly inconclusive, and any critique of their activity, in its present stage, is hazardous. Their future as practical agents of reform (for that is what they really are) is not to be predicted with any certainty. We can get just a little closer to certainty only by examining their plans and actions as a manifestation of a social tendency in our own times, and by comparing them with the tendencies represented in the work of the Sociologists Militant (*e.g.*, Messrs. Arthur Raper and John Dollard) and of the Social Planners (Messrs. Odum and Vance) whose purposes, with regard to the Southern region at least, are fully declared.

The Sociologist Militant is simply a reincarnation of the old-time Abolitionist, equipped with missionary zeal and a noble but very narrow humanitarian program. He cannot win his fight alone. He is in fact, I suspect, a baffled and somewhat lonely individual, capable of readily developing a martyr psychology. That alone makes him dangerous. For while ineffective in isolated action, he can quickly become a catalytic agent of tremendous power. The anti-slavery agitation could not of itself ever have freed the Negro slaves and did not of itself bring about the War Between the States. Nevertheless, it furnished the motive which seemed to justify Northern pressure and Southern resistance in the fifties and sixties, and so furnished the temper in which war could be waged. In our times the Sociologist Militant is the catalytic agent who helps precipitate action, of the North within the South, in such matters as share-croppers' unions, Federal anti-lynching laws, agitation for race equality, and other campaigns and programs that are socially disruptive along sectional or class lines. The Sociologist Militant will probably be unable to precipitate another war of section against section, but he could bring about civil strife — let us say, of the type that preceded the present Spanish war or that threatened France during the formation and early activities of the Popular Front.

The Social Planner is of a somewhat divided mind. Essentially, what he wants to do is to end foolish talk and let science calmly do its work. Since science tells him that there is much good to be conserved at home, as well as to be conferred from abroad, he attempts to set up and to instrument a principle of equilibrium which will make social action just and at the same time properly scientific. His plan is his instrumentation. But only a strong national government has the power to make it work – and it probably must be *made* to work, for you cannot get people voluntarily to limit free enterprise when the whole habit and structure of their society has schooled them to a devil-take-the-hindmost technique. And so he stands in great danger of being utilized as the mask for operations that will inevitably disregard his cherished principle of equilibrium. In brief, he is just as likely to supply instrumentation to the Sociologist Militant as to his own principle.

Both of these groups are not in any true sense lay citizens. They are professionals, who readily team up with other professionals – a bureaucratic government, organized business, organized philanthropy, organized labor, organized radicalism.

The Policy Groups, who propose to communicate the results of professional research to presumptive laymen and, through rational discussion, to prepare the body politic for action in the general interest, ought themselves to be largely a body of laymen. But where are the laymen?

I am not sure whether there are any laymen left in America. But since the lay spirit is what the Policy Groups count on most, it is certainly fair to ask whether it is really found among them.

An examination of the membership of their conferences and the turn of their deliberations does not, alas, indicate the presence of the lay spirit in any marked degree.

At the second annual conference of the Southern Policy Groups, one-fourth of the delegates were college professors (mostly, I suspect, of a liberal-to-left-wing tendency), and one-fifth were journalists or editors who probably tended in about the same direction as the college professors. Of the sixty-nine delegates and guests, seven came from government offices (chiefly Federal); eight were connected with propagandist organization; three were labor leaders. Since the Policy Groups have so far been set up in cities only, the whole cast of the meeting was inevitably urban. Probably the personnel might be described as "intellectualist". I doubt whether it included any dirt farmers, Fundamentalist preachers, business Tories, or actual mechanics, carpenters, salesmen, housewives, or philosophers.

With such a personnel, the deliberations and studies of the Policy Groups inevitably are limited in range. The terms of the discussion are pre-established by the participating minds. Discussion cannot be either open or free in the sense intended by the founders of the movement. Agreement is easily reached on the desirability of the Bankhead-Jones Farm-Tenant Bill, because nearly all minds are used to thinking in terms of subsidies and humanitarian uplift; but other types of approach, for example, distributism and agrarianism, which view ownership from a somewhat different angle, are met with shocked incomprehension, indifference, sheer refusal to discuss. A member anxious to preserve democratic institutions offers to resolve highly that the assembly deprecate the use of the word *communism* as an epithet of derogation intended to discredit whatever disturbs big business – and the resolution passes. But another resolution, proposing to deprecate the use of the term *fascism* for similar discreditable purposes by other parties, may fail of support, may indeed be hotly opposed. These are not intended as disclosures, but as hypothetical cases to illustrate the predisposition of a policy-making body whose policy-making can develop only in certain directions.

Furthermore, the informative pamphlets issued by the Policy Committee for the instruction of its membership (and presumably of the public, too), all lean in a similar direction. All infer a highly industrialized, pretty strongly centralized America, to be governed and administered somewhat as an ideal England or France would be governed, if we could believe what the experts say of those admirable nations. From a pamphlet on industrial social security in the South we learn, after much statistical analysis, that continued and large-scale intervention by the Federal government is to be expected. "Federal legislation" is the theme song of nearly every other paper. Though nearly all the published documents are sensible and moderate in tone as compared with the works of the Militants, and are all admirable in their combination of pithiness and comprehensiveness, most of them proceed on the general assumptions of the Social Planners.

There are not, in fact, any other prevailing assumptions among the Policy Groups, if their publications, discussions, and activities may be taken as present evidence. They never discuss general assumptions, but only specific remedies for specific ills. They are Social Planners, already professional in outlook to a high degree; they are not a cross-section of lay opinion. To their ranks they admit a fairly strong contingency from the Left, but would never dream of admitting representation from the Extreme Right, though they will show a few courtesies to the Moderate Right (which they seem to hold in a kind of amiable and amused contempt!).

The question, therefore, as to whether the Policy Groups can succeed in fulfilling their expressed purpose is already answered in part. They do not have, after all, the defect which some critics might ascribe to them, of being a too eclectic and academic body which will engage in polite quibbling while the house burns down over their heads. Their discussions and publications indicate, rather, that they have in common the "liberalism" found everywhere among educated Americans today, and especially among intellectual leaders in the South. They are very pragmatic as to means and very idealistic as to ends, but without having quite the full conviction either of their pragmatism or of their idealism. They do not need to commit themselves to any set of specific measures, but merely to conduct a discussion in terms that will lead to specific measures. They propose, as does the New Deal, to leave social and economic tendencies as they are, and apply a certain amount of humanitarian correction from above, to make the results of those tendencies easier to bear. They have not yet suggested a single "policy" that implies a philosophy different from the prevailing popular philosophies, nor have they made any specific suggestions different in kind from those suggestions made and discussed constantly in newspapers, magazines, and in business and professional conferences. What they want might be called The Well-Managed State—a well-regulated, quasi-democratic state like Great Britain. I see no reason to think that they have no chance of succeeding, at least temporarily. It is conceivable that they are setting the stage for the emergence of the Well-Managed State, foreseeing the day when the once ebullient New Deal will be choked into impotence by the large contradictions it has endeavored to swallow.

First, however, they must surmount two obstacles, both of them formidable. The first obstacle is the possibility that their groups may be seized as an instrument by the Militants among their number—always the most vocal in discussion, always the quickest with programs and glib solutions, and above all the readiest to call for purges and unanimity, as preludes to drastic action.

Another possibility is the rise of competing policy groups which, imitating their technique, will more closely resemble the old Committees of Correspondence in their open allegiance to principles proclaimed, not hidden, and in their passionate advocacy of such principles and all that goes with them. Such groups would contrast sharply with the present policy groups, which seem, on the whole, to follow the mild paths of expediency. Convictions would get the upper hand over research, conferences would become conventions, policy groups would become parties.

Perhaps that is exactly what Mr. Miller and his colleagues wish to forestall. The revival of the lay spirit as a means of reviving the "democratic process" – that appears to be the instrument conceived as capable of thwarting, on one hand, any wild growth of "factions" or on the other hand a too commanding spirit in government. But again we must ask: where are the laymen? And without the lay spirit how can one revive the "democratic process", which Mr. Miller, like Thomas Jefferson, conceives as resting upon the lively capability of many citizens, if not all citizens, of making disinterested judgements in public affairs?

To illustrate the difficulty it seems worth while to alter slightly one of Mr. Miller's most significant remarks and extend it to cover the situation as here analyzed. To the sentence quoted above I add certain phrases – the italicized portions: "Where *policy groups* [not merely the government] have to recruit interest in the problems of government, liberty is on the wane, and on the wane less because government is assuming new functions than because *human society, under a scientific and industrial dispensation, makes its citizens incapable of exercising old functions.*"

In short, Mr. Miller cannot by artificial means produce a genuine revival of the lay spirit in a society so constructed as to forbid the growth of a lay spirit, or, in fact, to make the very means of existence dependent upon the absence of a lay spirit. The fact that policy groups seem to be much needed is in itself a symptom, or maybe all the proof that we want, of the general atrophy and loss of the policy-making faculty and of the absence of true laymen. Until Mr. Miller and his able colleagues are willing to examine critically the nature and aims of a society that destroys the lay spirit, they will not make much headway in restoring it. They will not be really restoring the democratic process, and their policy-making, even though effective (as it well may become) will not be democratic, except under that license of the modern vocabulary which will generate for this occasion as for others a very fine figure of speech.

Henry James and the Relation of Morals to Manners

YVOR WINTERS

"Be careful not to drink at Maule's well!" said he. "Neither drink nor bathe your face in it!"

"Maule's well!" answered Phoebe. "Is that it with the rim of mossy stones? I have no thought of drinking there – but why not?"

"Oh," rejoined the daguerreotypist, "because, like an old lady's cup of tea, it is water bewitched!" – *The House of the Seven Gables.*

THE motivating ideas of most of the novels of Henry James might be summarized very briefly, and perhaps a trifle crudely, as follows: that there is a moral sense, a sense of decency, inherent in human character at its best; that this sense of decency, being only a sense, exists precariously, and may become confused and even hysterical in a crisis; that it may be enriched and cultivated through association with certain environments; that such association may, also, be carried so far as to extinguish the moral sense. This last relationship, that of the moral sense to an environment which may up to a certain point enrich it and beyond that point dissolve it, resembles the ordinary relationship of intellect to experience, of character to sensibility.

If we carry these generalizations a little further into the specific terms of his novels, we find, however: that the moral sense as James conceives it is essentially American or at least appears to James most clearly in American character; that it can be cultivated by association with European civilization and manners; that it may be weakened or in some other manner betrayed by an excess of such association.

Superficially this description seems to omit the novels of the brief middle period, in which most of the characters are British and in which none are American; but actually these novels are in nearly every case constructed in much the same terms, for the "American" characteristics are given to certain personages, and the "European" to certain others. This formula will be somewhat qualified as we proceed, but I believe that it is essentially sound.

While this particular kind of moral sense may have existed in Europe as well as in America, so far as James was concerned, it was essentially an American phenomenon. In the first place, I believe that I shall be able to show how a degree of intensity of this moral sense was an actual and historical development in the American context. In the second place, we have in James the ultimate and rarefied development of the spiritual antagonism which had existed for centuries between the rising provincial civilization and the richer civilization from which it had broken away, an antagonism in which the provincial civilization met the obviously superior cultivation of the parent with a more or less typically provincial assertion of moral superiority. The same theme obsesses Fenimore Cooper for a large portion of his career, though conceived in terms less subtle; it is this antagonism which, from pre-Revolutionary days to the present, has resulted in the attempt, unhealthy in its self-consciousness and in its neurotic intensity, to create a literature which shall be utterly independent of that of England. The same antagonism has led many of the compatriots of Henry James to disown him as a foreigner because of his long residence abroad, and it led his Western contemporaries of the intellectual stamp of Clemens to despise James in turn for his cultivation and artistry. There is further evidence that James conceived this moral sense to be essentially American, moreover, in the fact that the moral phenomenon and its attendant dramatic formula alike were first defined in the early American period of his art, and that they were most fully and richly developed in his last great masterpieces, *The Ambassadors*, *The Wings of the Dove*, and *The Golden Bowl.*

The origin of this moral sense may be given briefly and with fair certainty, though James himself nowhere defines it: it was the product of generations of discipline in the ethical systems of the Roman Catholic and Anglo-Catholic Churches, a product which subsisted as a traditional way of feeling and of acting after the ideas which had formed it, and which, especially in Europe and before the settlement of America, had long supported it, had ceased to be understood, or, as ideas, valued. The Anglo-Catholic Church in New York and farther south, even before the Revolutionary War, tended to rely upon society for its support, rather than to support society; it was the external sign of the respectability of a class, and was scarcely an evangelizing or an invigorating force. This phenomenon can be observed in the social novels of Cooper, who views it benignantly; and it is mentioned specifically by Mrs. Wharton, whose approval is tempered with comprehension, in the opening pages of *The Old Maid*. In this condensed novel, Mrs. Wharton writes as follows:

> The Ralstons were of middle-class English stock. They had not come to the colonies to die for a creed but to live for a bank account. The result had been beyond their hopes, and their religion was tinged by their success. An edulcorated Church of England which, under the conciliatory name of the "Episcopal Church of the United States of America", left out the coarser allusions in the Marriage Service, slid over the comminatory passages in the Athanasian Creed, and thought it more respectful to say "Our Father *Who*" than "*Which*" in the Lord's Prayer, was exactly suited to the spirit of compromise whereon the Ralstons had built themselves up. There was in all the tribe the same instinctive recoil from new religions as from unaccounted-for people. Institutional to the core, they represented the conservative element that holds new societies together as sea-plants bind the seashore.

And a little farther on she writes as follows: "The fourth generation of Ralstons had nothing left in the way of convictions save an acute sense of honor in private and business matters; on the life of the community and the state they took their daily views from the newspapers, and the newspapers they already despised."

The moral sense in question, however, might have been a much weaker motive, and certainly would not have been an essentially American motive, had it not been intensified through the influence of New England. In New England, the Calvinistic theology denied the freedom of the will and the efficaciousness of good works — that is, it denied the importance of the whole subject of morality, at least in formal doctrine — but at the same time, as a result of its inner inconsistencies and of the practical struggles of the Puritans, as I have shown in discussing Hawthorne,* it dramatized and intensified the moral struggle in an extraordinary manner. Throughout a relatively brief period, perhaps for less than a century, the moral sense of New England as a whole, and throughout a much longer period the moral sense of large segments of New England, was both simplified and intensified by Calvinistic ideas, at the same time that these ideas, because of their inner contradictions, and as they worked, under the emotional pressure of the period, in the minds of the subtler theologians, were literally proving self-destructive. By 1730 the ideas were become so widely ineffective as to alarm the surviving faithful. The preachers of the Great Awakening gave them a renewed energy, in part intellectual, though primarily emotional, but the new energy, being factitious, the result of the impact of a new rhetoric rather than of a new clarification, was short-lived. While Edwards gave them a new and powerful intellectual adjustment, the adjustment was among the ideas themselves, and scarcely clarified the increasingly obvious discrepancies between the ideas and daily life, so that daily life moved on and left them. The ideas killed themselves off, except as they existed, half-understood, in the remoter village congregations; but the emotional energy, the New England conscience, was longer in dying. It gave the Unitarian Church its principal claim to dignity; it persisted even in Emerson, as a private citizen, at the same time that Emerson was preaching pantheism, equivalence, and surrender to instinct.

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New England was the only part of America in which a church ever exercised a formative and governing influence upon society, so that for certain periods in American history the adjectives *Puritan* and *New England* are practically interchangeable. Further, New England until well into the nineteenth century provided the schoolmasters for most of the United States. Van Wyck Brooks comments upon this fact in *The Flowering of New England*; he says:

> Edward Everett Hale relates that a certain French investigator, sent by Napoleon III to study American education, found that virtually every teacher in the West and South had come from one small corner of the country, either Connecticut or Massachusetts. He asked Hale to explain this fact, which he said was unique in history. Hale, to settle the question, enquired of a leading citizen of Massachusetts how many young people of his town, when they left school, began as teachers. "He heard me," says Hale, "with some impatience, and then said, 'Why all of them, of course.' "

Brooks cites Emerson, in addition, as advising "his fellow-townsmen to manufacture school-teachers and make them the best in the world". If one has ever read *Satanstoe*, by Fenimore Cooper, one will scarcely forget Jason Newcome, the New England schoolmaster who settled in New York, nor the inability of Corny Littlepage, the New Yorker, to understand Jason's belief that the calling of the schoolmaster was both respectable and enviable; this in spite of the fact that Jason represented the New England conscience in a degraded form, that of the caution of the hypocrite.

In addition to this, New England until the middle of the nineteenth century not only produced at least a fair proportion of the political talent of the nation, but she produced nearly all of the major literary talent. If we except Poe, a Southerner, whose literary merit appears to the present writer to be a very frail delusion; if we except Irving, a charming writer, but a minor writer at best; if we except Cooper, a great writer, and a New Yorker without mitigation; we have but two great New York talents after Freneau and preceding the Civil War. The first is W. C. Bryant, a New Englander in origin, who wrote most of his best work before leaving New England. The second is Herman Melville, whose father was born in New England, but of an immigrant parent, and whose mother came of an old New York family. Melville was himself born and raised in New York, yet all his work was profoundly colored by New England, and his greatest work was an allegorical epic of New England. The influence of New England upon the spiritual life of the nation till about 1850 or 1860 may thus be conceded to have been extremely great; as a matter of fact it continued much later, though with diminishing force. The most remarkable evidence of its later continuance is the work of Henry James, another New Yorker. Of this continuance there is ample objective evidence, in such characters as Lambert Strether, and in that unforgettable legend of New England, *The Europeans*, perhaps the most beautiful of James's minor works (omitted from the definitive edition for reasons that must always remain obscure to me). It is even found in *The Bostonians* – had he not been as familiar with the New England conscience as with his own, he could scarcely have written such a work.

For practical purposes, the New England moral sense was merely an intensification of that of New York. Like that of New York it derived ultimately from the pre-American Catholic discipline, but unlike that of New York, or at least of English New York, it had experienced a Calvinistic interlude. This interlude intensified it, notwithstanding the fact that such an interlude, rationally considered, ought to have destroyed it at the time. Historically considered, the interlude ultimately did destroy it, long afterward, by severing its connection with the one and only source of its nourishment – the Aristotelian ethical tradition as embodied in the Catholic Church. The New England moral sense, then, might readily enough be imposed in some measure upon the New Yorker, and though it often appeared both obnoxious and ludicrous to him, because of the very intensification in question, as we see it appearing in *Satanstoe*, in *The Chainbearer*, and in *The Bostonians*, it none the less influenced and strengthened him in the long run. At last it began to die in both environments through the increase of the temporal separation from its source and the corrupting influence of the anti-moral philosophy of Emersonian and other romantics. It was diluted with the post-war inundation of uprooted immigrants and further weakened by the uprooted Americans who in tremendous numbers had broken with their traditions and moved West. Two other factors in its decline were the inundation of new and imperfectly digested scientific knowledge and the influence of the new financial aristocracy. The latter had arisen after the Civil War with great rapidity and by methods in most cases immoral and illegal — and hence corrupting by way of example — caused a tremendous drain upon the spiritual life of the nation, along with the material impoverishment of great multitudes.

This moral sense, as it existed about equally in James and in his characters, then, was a fine, but a very delicate perception, unsupported by any clear set of ideas, and functioning, not only in minds of very subtle construction, but at the very crisis in history at which it was doomed to be almost infinitely rarefied and finally to be dissolved in air. Since James conceived the art of the novel primarily in terms of plot, and plot almost wholly in terms of ethical choice and of its consequences; since he raised the plotting of the novel to a level of seriousness which it had never before attained in English; since all intelligent criticism of James is resolved inevitably into a discussion of plot; this moral sense, this crisis in history, will prove, I believe, to be the source of the essential problem of James's art.

II

James displays in all of his more serious work an unmistakable desire to allow his characters unrestricted freedom of choice and to develop his plots out of such choice and out of consequent acts of choice to which the initial acts may lead. Absolutely considered, no human complex is ever free from a great many elements which are without the control and even the understanding of the human participants. We may discover this fact very simply if we consider for a moment *A Portrait of a Lady*.

We may fairly say that it is chance which brings Mme Merle into the life of Isabel Archer: at any rate, the entrance of Mme Merle is a fact in itself of absolutely no ethical antecedents or significance. On the other hand, we may say that the actions of Isabel Archer are in certain respects and up to a certain point determined: she is first of all human, and is subject to the fundamental necessities of humanity; being a normal young woman, she is fairly certain to marry, for example. And if she marries, she will in the matter of choice be limited by chance – that is, she will have to choose from among the men whom she happens to know, even if we suppose it to be within her power to attract any man whom she desires. Her choice within these limits may in a sense be said to be determined – as perhaps it actually was – by a temperamental bent of her own which she fails to understand and consider, or by the facts of her personal history, which result in certain forms of knowledge and certain forms of ignorance and may consequently lead her to judge a situation on the basis of imperfect knowledge. The initial tragic error of Hyacinth Robinson, of *The Princess Casamassima*, is conceived as a free choice made in ignorance of the essential knowledge which would have prevented it. Mrs. Wharton's finest short work, *Bunner Sisters*, is, on the contrary, conceived as a sequence of steps taken by the two protagonists into tragic knowledge, steps made freely and apparently wisely on the basis of the knowledge held when they are taken.

Elements of this sort are what we call the given facts of the plot: they are the ineliminable facts of character and of initial situation. We have a certain group of particularized individuals in juxtaposition; the particularity is destiny, the juxtaposition chance. But the understanding and the will may rise in some measure superior to destiny and to chance, and when they do so, we have human victory; or they may make the effort and fail, in which case we have tragedy; or the failure having occurred, there may be a comprehension of the failure and a willed adjustment to it, in which case we have the combination of tragedy and victory. It is this combination the representation of which Henry James especially strives to achieve.

Some novelists — Defoe, for example, or Hardy — make a conscious effort to give the human participant the smallest possible freedom of play; James endeavors to give him the greatest possible freedom, and he is so successful in the effort that in reading one of his better novels one is conscious almost exclusively of the problem of ethical choice.

The norm of human experience, in the matter of unhampered choice, is probably somewhere between the extremes of Moll Flanders and of Isabel Archer, and the novelist who goes to one extreme or the other simply refuses to consider intelligently certain aspects of human life. There is possibly greater educative value — there are wider ethical implications — in suffering the consequences of an ill-judged but unhampered choice than in any other department of experience; on the other hand, the person whose choice is normally unhampered may often appear to have an abominably facile existence in the eyes of him whose life is an unbroken and unavailing endurance of necessity, whose primary virtue must of necessity be fortitude.

James sought in so far as possible, it would seem, to create the illusion of unhampered choice; he sought to study the ethical judgment of his time and nation in the purest essence to which he could distill it. This I believe to have been a limitation, but of the two alternative limitations, if one is to choose one or the other extreme, it is distinctly the lesser evil. Of the limitations as such, I shall have nothing further to say; but it was also the source of obscurity, and the nature of this obscurity, and the nature of James's struggle to master it, will be the subject of this examination.

James was abetted in his effort to isolate the moral problem by the defects of his own knowledge: although he possessed the most refined ethical sensibility of his period, and the sensibility the most profoundly American, his education and background were such that he knew very little of American life and manners. With the American abroad he was familiar; with the travelled American on his return, he was not unfamiliar; and one could extend the catalogue to a few other particulars. But he knew nothing of American economic life, a fact which he recognized and deplored; and he knew next to nothing of the daily detail, of the manners, of any single and reasonably representative American class in its native environment, a fact which will become abundantly obvious if one compares any of his novels to *The Age of Innocence* by Mrs. Wharton. His own childhood, under the guidance of his elegantly bohemian father, familiarized him with an intellectual class, but with a class consistent only in its intellectuality, and composed of individuals largely detached, as he saw them, from their social backgrounds – his social experience was essentially amorphous.

In one of his letters, he addresses a correspondent as follows: "I sympathize even less with your protest against the idea that it takes an old civilization to set a novelist in motion – a proposition that seems to me so true as to be a truism. It is on manners, customs, usages, habits, forms, upon all these things matured and established, that a novelist lives – they are the very stuff his work is made of." James was no doubt right in the general proposition, for a novel requires bulk, and the bulk can be composed only of a scrutiny of the daily detail of life; but the notion that America did not offer any body of manners worth examining was false, as the work of Mrs. Wharton, again, to go no further, amply shows – James was simply insufficiently familiar with his country or insufficiently observant of it.

In such a book as *The Age of Innocence*, Mrs. Wharton shows us a group of characters whose actions are governed according to the same ethical history and principles which I have mentioned in connection with James. But the characters are living in a society cognate and coterminous with those principles; the society with its customs and usages is the external form of the principles. Now the customs and usage may become unduly externalized, and when they appear so to become, Mrs. Wharton satirizes them; but in the main they represent the concrete aspect of the abstract principles of behavior. Thus when Newland Archer and the Countess Olenska are on the point of eloping, one of the strongest incentives to their withdrawal is the fact that they will be forced into a mode of life of a bohemian and disorderly sort which must inevitably degrade their love in their own eyes. This incentive is essentially serious, for the usages which they are unwilling to abandon are the embodiment of serious principles; whereas the usages which they are unwilling to adopt represent a weak falling away from those principles.

In this way Mrs. Wharton gives greater precision to her moral issues than James is able to achieve, for James endeavors, as I have said, to isolate from the manners which might have given it concreteness a moral sense which is already isolated by history from the ideas which gave rise to it. Ellen Glasgow, in such novels as *They Stooped to Folly* and *Virginia*, carries the procedure of Mrs. Wharton a step farther, and by the measure of that step loses in seriousness: she shows her characters so dominated by a system of manners, or so emotionally, so automatically, in rebellion against a system of manners, as to be essentially unconscious of their motives and so determined. She does not give an untrue picture of life, for there are more people in the world resembling Virginia and her husband than resembling Newland Archer; but she gives a less complete picture of human nature, for Newland Archer is a man of intelligence as well as of sensibility.

In comparison with a Jamesian character, however, Archer and Ellen Olenska are governed by circumstance; the Jamesian character has greater freedom, in part because James couldn't help it, and in part because he would no doubt have wished it anyway. The moral issue, then, since it is primarly an American affair, is freed in most of the Jamesian novels, and in all of the greatest, from the compulsion of a code of manners.

The moral issue is also freed from economic necessity. Money is never an impelling motive in a Jamesian novel: that is, no one is forced to choose, as Moll Flanders was forced to choose, between crime and starvation. On the other hand, a lack of sufficient funds to live in luxury is a frequent motive to baseness among the corrupt characters; Lambert Strether, in *The Ambassadors*, surmounts this temptation among others. The lack of money may be sufficiently great to be a temptation; but it is never sufficiently great to be compelling. Isabel Archer is benevolently provided with funds after her story opens, with the express purpose that her action shall thereafter be unhampered.

This necessity, in the Jamesian art, of seeing to it that the leading characters shall be well fixed, leads to some curious paradoxes. Christopher Newman, of *The American*, for example, is a perfect embodiment of the Jamesian conscience, yet he is a man of fabulous wealth, which he had acquired himself in a very few years, immediately following the Civil War, largely in Western railroads, and he is, in addition, a citizen of San Francisco – he is, in brief, a colleague of Leland Stanford and of Collis P. Huntington. James conceives nearly all of his American financiers in the same terms, until he comes to write *The Ivory Tower*, a book in which an intense suspicion, never supported by exact knowledge, of the evil of American financial life, of its corrupting effect on the characters of the participants, is the explicit theme.

If we demand of a novelist that he portray a society accurately as regards all its externals, this contradiction in Jamesian character would be all but fatal to his art. We could justify it to a certain extent by saying that there were in the Eastern United States individuals of moderate wealth either inherited or otherwise honestly acquired; that James erred only in the unnecessary exaggeration of the wealth of his characters, in attributing to a man of the character, let us say, of an Adams or a Phillips, the wealth of a Sage or a Vanderbilt, in a period in which it is notorious that such wealth could not be decently accumulated. We might justify him to a certain extent by pleading the indisputable fact that many men who are notoriously unscrupulous in matters of finance or of politics preserve the domestic virtues intact; though such an apology in the background of *The Golden Bowl* would necessarily mitigate our sense of the tragedy of Adam Verver.

Such apologies would up to a certain point be sound, although they would certainly be insufficient. The real objection to them, however, is that they would be irrelevant; they would be offered in defense of a misconception of the Jamesian art. For James is definitely not examining the whole of a society; he is examining the mathematical center of a society — the ethical consciousness of a society — and he is examining nothing more. For the rest, so far as his Americans are concerned, he is employing a fictive convention, the convention of fabulous wealth fabulously acquired and resulting in the freedom of the possessor from necessity, in order to isolate the ethical consciousness in question more perfectly than it is to be found isolated in life. In this respect, his art approaches that of the allegorist, of the symbolic poet: it is an art not of inclusion, but of representative and essential selection.

We find, then, that James succeeded to a remarkable degree in separating the problem of ethical choice from the influence of ethical habit and of social pressure as they appear in the guise of manners or of economic necessity. The consequences of this success remain to be seen.

III

James was thus unequipped to deal adequately with any major aspect of American manners, yet he was a novelist of manners by natural gift and by his own admission; he was furthermore profoundly American in character. The problem was solved naturally by the facts of his personal history: he dealt with the American, uprooted from his native usages, and confronted with the alien usages of a subtle and ancient society.

In the early works and in some of the minor works of later years, the confrontation leads to curious results. Christopher Newman may serve again as the illustration: there is not only the paradox of his possessing a virgin New England conscience along with a fortune acquired in Western railroads, but there is the additional paradox of his possessing the gentle flexibility of a New England or New York aristocrat at his best, along with a social naïveté that irritates the Bellegardes. James in his effort to indicate a part of the basis for this irritation writes certain scenes in which Newman converses with a rural and moralizing garrulity that puts one strongly in mind of Natty Bumppo.

In the more mature works, the relationship is, of course, stated far more subtly. The Ververs are gentle and cultivated people, who are circumvented by persons a shade less gentle and a shade more cultivated, the fine degrees of difference, however, being firmly indicative of an essential cleavage in character. Lambert Strether is from the outset of *The Ambassadors* a person of great astuteness of perception as well as of unusual character; Chad Newsome, the character in this particular novel most profoundly affected by the contact with Europe, starts out as a crude and unformed boy, his crudity being largely accounted for by his age. The difference is most obvious, perhaps, in the case of Isabel Archer: she is, from the beginning, the social equal of any person whom she encounters; but she is inexperienced, and her exposure to Europe is an exposure to an unexpectedly rich and extraordinary experience, which confuses her. Nevertheless, from the beginning to the end of James, certain major relationships are apparent.

There is the American who is subjected to the European influence and enriched by it; as examples, we may cite Ralph Touchett of the *Portrait*, and Strether and Maria Gostrey of *The Ambassadors*. There is the American who in the process of becoming so enriched, suffers a dissolution of his moral nature, and who becomes merely a more or less conscious scoundrel. As extreme examples of this type, we may cite Osmund and Mme Merle of the *Por-*

trait; as an example of a less conscious type of corruption, we may cite Christina Light, though her American heritage of blood and background is relatively small, especially as she appears in *Roderick Hudson*, less obviously as she appears in *The Princess Casamassima*. Strether appears of this type to the Newsomes in Massachusetts. Chad Newsome, who appears of this type at the outset of *The Ambassadors*, later appears of the admirable type of Touchett, and at the end remains ambiguous and unresolved, a question for the future, in the eyes of the reader and of Strether alike. There is the American who, in the process of acquiring this valuable experience, is betrayed by another character, whether American or native European, who has too much of it, or conversely and proportionately too little moral sense: such characters are Maggie Verver and her father in *The Golden Bowl*, Milly Theale in *The Wings of the Dove*, Isabel Archer in the *Portrait*, and (if we suspect a trifle the worst of Chad Newsome) Lambert Strether in *The Ambassadors*. This formula of betrayal is the tragic formula in the Jamesian novel: in a sub-plot of *The Ambassadors*, there is (but only, again, if we suspect the worst of Chad Newsome) a curious variation of it. Chad, having been enriched and so (perhaps) corrupted through his experience with Mme de Vionnet, appears (perhaps) likely at the end of the book to betray Mme de Vionnet, who, though she is a European and though she has displayed certain comprehensible human weaknesses, is a sympathetic character. There are the Americans who are essentially too provincial, and who are frequently too coarse, to be subject either to the benefits or to the dangers of the European experience. These individuals are sometimes merely dull vulgarians, like Jim Pocock of *The Ambassadors*; they are sometimes comic but sympathetic figures like Waymarsh of *The Ambassadors*, or like Henrietta Stackpole of the *Portrait*. They are sometimes admirable in a very limited sense, but invidious in the long run to the decencies, through their very limitations and a kind of neurotic intensity, like Mrs. Newsome and her daughter, of *The Ambassadors*. More rarely, like Caspar Goodwood, of the *Portrait*, they have a kind of tragic simplicity of directness in a world essentially fluid, evasive, and incomprehensible, at least as regards human motive. Goodwood is tragic because, though imperceptive, he has high character and high intelligence, and because he unfailingly and in spite of constant disappointment expects human beings to act intelligently. Henrietta Stackpole has the same expectation, but lacking so fine an intelligence or so high a character (though of course she is a very good soul in her fashion) she is necessarily comic. The character immune to European influence is never central to the Jamesian plot, and never alters or develops to any serious degree in the course of the book, though things may happen to him.

In the British novels of the middle period, the same precarious balance between character and sensibility is studied, and from the same hypersensitive American point of view, in spite of there being almost no American characters. In *The Tragic Muse*, the solid qualities and limitations of the British upper class replace the narrower and more intense moral qualities of the American heritage. Dormer and

Sherringham attempt to build a richer life on this foundation, Sherringham to fail, Dormer presumably to succeed. The book, though it offers a handful of unforgettable characters, collapses structurally as a result of its double plot, so that one's recollection of the manners, or the medium in which the characters move, is likely to be more clear than the morality, or the form of their motion. In *The Awkward Age*, to select another example, Nanda, Mitchy, and Mr. Longdon, the only characters possessing sufficient moral quality to rely in some measure upon it, are all more or less the victims of persons unable to distinguish between morals and manners, of persons so externalized as to be essentially corrupt. In the British novels in general, I should say, and especially in *The Spoils of Poynton*, this antithesis of morals and manners appears less clearly than in *The American*; in fact, in *The Spoils of Poynton*, the morality is largely an isolated question, and stands only in the vaguest sense in the usual relationship to manners.

Toward the end of his life, in *The Ivory Tower*, James reversed the formula in certain respects. He appeared to be troubled by the corrupting influence of American financial life on those who were not subjected to a civilizing influence. In this book, he employs as hero a Europeanized American, Graham Fielder, a man of the same admirable type as Ralph Touchett, but of much less force of character. Fielder had been raised in Europe, apart from the financial life in America; he was thus the heir in some measure and perhaps in a diluted form of the earlier American moral sense as well as of European cultivation. James brings him into contact with the corrupt financial life of America early in the twentieth century, shows him defeated in the realm of action by an exemplar of this life, but rising superior to his adversary in a moral sense. This form of corruption had, of course, been thriving throughout James's career, and James had shown little suspicion of its existence; even in *The Ivory Tower* he does not know exactly what forms the corruption takes, but merely feels its presence, as a kind of social atmosphere. However, the same corruption in the background of *The Ambassadors* — the same stupid corruption which was sufficient to drive Henry Adams out of political life — lends a certain seriousness to the choice which confronts Chad Newsome, the choice between the life of a business man in America and the life of a cultivated idler in Europe.

In general, however, the subject of the characteristic Jamesian novel is the influence of the cultivation of sensibility (in other words, the experience of contact with European manners) upon moral character in a pure or isolated form (that is, upon the American moral sense, divorced from any body of American manners). The implications of this relationship of morality to sensibility are of the most profound and the most general sort, in spite of the fact that the concrete terms giving rise to the implications are relatively limited. It is obvious, then, that James is much more than a mere portrayer of the American abroad; his work partakes in a considerable measure of the allegorical character of the work of Hawthorne. The principal dangers inherent in the subject and in the method we shall now examine.

(*To be concluded*)

John Dewey and the Classical Tradition

FOLKE LEANDER

Two very different interpretations of the "classical tradition" are current today in America. One is sponsored by John Dewey; the other is associated with the names of Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmer More. In both cases the term "classical tradition" means roughly the same; their interpretations of it, however, differ; and their evaluations are opposed *toto coelo*. Both views are very influential, the former primarily among professional philosophers, the latter among students of literature. To contribute toward the clarification of this issue is the aim of the present essay. It seems to me – if I may anticipate my conclusion – that Dewey shows us very convincingly what the classical tradition may degenerate into and what, for the most part, it actually has degenerated into; his highly illuminating picture of it is therefore true in important respects. More and Babbitt, on the other hand, hold up for us a picture of what it has been at its best and what its great spokesmen intended it to be. They introduce us to the truly classical tradition; Dewey, it would seem, is only aware of its pseudo-classical counterpart.

Perhaps as good a quotation as any to bring out the essence of Dewey's view is the following, taken from *Philosophy and Civilization*:

> *Sub specie aeternitatis*? or *sub specie generationis*? I am susceptible of the aesthetic charm of the former ideal –

who is not? There are moments of relaxation: there are moments when the demand for peace, to be left alone and relieved from the continual claim of the world in which we live that we be up and doing something about it, seems irresistible; when the responsibilities imposed by living in a moving universe seem intolerable.

Here we have it: the classical attitude toward life is essentially one of escape, withdrawal; escape from the tasks and duties which the world of change sets before us, and withdrawal into the undisturbed peace of a life of contemplation. The really ethical attitude, on the other hand, is to be "up and doing something about it", to see things *sub specie generationis*, that is, to attend to the causality through which changes come about in order to control them better. Classicism, we are told, is a cowardly withdrawal from the world of change; the Baconian attitude, on the other hand, is one of courageous outgoing acceptance of change and the problems which it sets us. Classicists no less than romantics, Dewey holds, shut themselves up in ivory towers; "what in effect is love of ease", he writes, "has masqueraded morally as love of perfection". As an illustration he gives us Aristotle's teleology and the glorification of the contemplative life implicit in it; and "the final terminus on this road is Nirvana, an obliteration of all thought and desire".

Now "love of ease" is a surprising description of Buddhism. "By rousing himself," we read in the Dhammapada, "by strenuousness, by temperance and self-control the wise man may make for himself an island which no flood can overwhelm." (One wonders who was the greater lover of ease, the Buddha or Professor Dewey?) In general this "love-of-ease" interpretation of the great religions as well as of Platonic-Aristotelian humanism is scarcely convincing. Whatever else it may be it is bad phenomenology; it forms an illustration of what William James called "the psychologist's fallacy". "We must be very careful," James said, "in discussing a state of mind from the psychologist's point of view, to avoid foisting into its own ken matters that are only there for ours." Dewey has not perhaps been wholly successful in avoiding this fallacy when picturing what, no doubt, is temperamentally unsympathetic to him. It is here that Babbitt's and More's work may be valuable in supplying a truer phenomenological account. Energy, not love of ease, was for them the essence of the classical tradition in all its forms. The phrase of Pindar's which so impressed Goethe, *epikratein dynastai*, contains the soul of all true classicism, as they understand it; it is a vital intuition of that energizing *kalokagathia* which differs from psychic unrestraint as much as a well-trained athletic body differs from one that is clumsy, lazy, untrained, misshaped. There is nothing "ascetic" in Greek humanism except in this sense. But above the humanistic level, reaching a magnificent height and austerity, is the religious plane of life, the level of saintliness, Christian and Buddhistic; yet this is not the ideal of humanism which is definitely earthly, not unearthly. To return to the point at issue, it is hard to see how the classical ideal (and still more the religious!) can be twisted to mean "love of ease", except by a gross psychological misreading. Dewey would no doubt reply, in one of his favorite phrases, that it is rooted in withdrawal, in "fear of what life may bring forth". But is not this catchphrase at bottom meaningless? We all of us had better have some "fear of what life may bring forth" and see to it that we gain some control over events. The scientific way of dealing with this problem is no doubt one of our more valuable resources, and Dewey is right in stressing its value. The "arts of acceptance and control" have definitely added to the enjoyment of life. But do they really make the classical ideal superfluous, as Dewey would have it? He has brought no proof for that. Incidentally, is not utilitarianism, too, rooted in fear of what life may bring forth?

A closely related aspect of Dewey's interpretation of the "classical tradition" is his identificaton of it with rigidity of custom and inert conventionalism. The following passage, from *Human Nature and Conduct*, may be quoted as a summary of his point of view:

> There are plenty of persons to tell us that the real trouble [in contemporary life] lies in lack of fixity of habit and principle; in departure from immutable standards and structures constituted once for all. We are told that we are suffering fom an excess of instinct, and from laxity of habit due to surrender to impulse as a law of life. The remedy is said to be to return from contemporary fluidity to the stable and spacious patterns of a classic antiquity that observed law and proportion: for somehow antiquity is always classic. When instability, uncertainty, erratic change are diffused throughout the situation, why dwell upon the evils of fixed habit and the need of release of impulse as an initiator of reorganizations [—the thing that Dewey emphasizes]? Why not rather condemn impulse and exalt habits of reverencing order and fixed truth? The question is natural, but the remedy suggested is futile. . . . A laxity due to decadence of old habits cannot be corrected by exhortations to restore old

habits in their former rigidity. Even though it were abstractly desirable it is impossible. And it is not desirable because the inflexibility of old habits is precisely the chief cause of their decay and disintegration. Plaintive lamentations at the prevalence of change and abstract appeals for restoration of senile authority are signs of personal feebleness, of inability to cope with change. It is a "defense reaction".

Eine grausame Salve! But does it hit classicism in the sense in which Goethe understood the word, in which Babbitt understood it? Certainly inert conservatism is an evil, and a program "to restore old habits in their former rigidity" would be criminal nonsense. But it is scarcely better to identify such a program with the classical ideal. Whether this identification be made by those who stand for inert conservatism or by those who, like Dewey, oppose it, it remains a pernicious error. Here Babbitt and More took a sounder view: what Plato and Aristotle were concerned with was not the enforcing of a code of conventions; they affirmed the value of a certain *state of mind* – that of the "just" man who is master of all his passions and does not allow anyone of them to carry him beyond what his judgement tells him is right. "To be strong unto measuredness" (*karterein pros to metrion*) is a phrase that sums up the essence of Plato's ethics. Particular codes and conventions do not enter into the picture at all. The validity of this ideal – as Babbitt and More had the merit of seeing very clearly – has nothing whatever to do with this or that particular set of conventions and "habits". There is no reason why it should not be reaffirmed today, and that without a trace of "reaction". To go on today identifying classicism with "personal feebleness", "inability to cope with change", in short, "love of ease", is an easy but rather feeble way of coping with the intellectual problems of a changing world. The true remedy of our modern ills, Dewey tells us, "lies in the development of a new morale which can be attained only as released impulses are intelligently employed to form harmonious habits adapted to one another in a new situation". Very true; our problem is to work out new stable relationships between men, new habits, new conventions, where the changes introduced by the Industrial Revolution have made loyalty to traditional conventions and habits impossible. But why oppose this program to the classical ideal, as if they were incompatible?

When developing his own ethics, to be sure, Dewey is well aware of the distinction between morality and convention. "If we state the moral law as the injunction to each self on every possible occasion to identify the self with a new growth that is possible, then obedience to law is one with moral freedom." The "new growth that is possible" is of course what in popular parlance is called the voice of conscience. In general, it is hard to see where Dewey's ethics would differ in practice from the ethics of the "classical tradition". In substance, he criticizes the latter for allowing the voice of conscience to become identified with the voice of the unintelligent, uncriticized habit, or with the voice of external authority (as, for instance, the categorical imperative in practice became the voice of the Prussian government), and rationalizing the resulting injustices in the name of "higher ends" and a *summum bonum* to which all other considerations should be subservient. All of this is true; and I am by no means insensitive to the nobility of Dewey's own ethical ideal: that of a forward-looking intelligence which, attending to consequences, courageously challenges all the brutality and injustice which hide beneath fine phrases and noble sentiment. Only I doubt whether this ethical attitude is more fool-proof than its predecessors; it is, in fact, just as liable to misuse by conscious and unconscious hypocrisy as any other ethical system, and the absence of a *summum bonum* does not in the least mend matters in this respect.

I cannot see that there is anything strikingly new in Dewey's ethical ideal. It is, indeed, part of "classical" ethics; and the assumption of scientific airs and an engineering attitude in the search for consequences is but a superficial innovation. Yet in the name of this ideal Dewey attacks the classical tradition – and misrepresents it; for in ascribing to it systematic disregard of consequences, Dewey himself shows disregard of the facts. Consider for instance the following typical passage in *The Quest for Certainty*:

> Indulge for a moment in imaginative flight. Suppose that . . . men had been systematically educated to believe that the important thing is not to get themselves personally "right" in relation to the antecedent author and guarantor of . . . values, but to form their judgements and carry on their activities on the basis of public, objective, and shared consequences. Imagine these things and then imagine what the present situation might be.

Why does Dewey consistently put these two things in an invidious opposition to one another? Has not "getting oneself right" always been the same as doing the right actions? In *German Philosophy and Politics* the same charge is leveled against Kant's ethics: "To admit that consequences can be taken into account in deciding what duty is in a particular case would be to make concessions to the empirical and sensible world which are fatal to the scheme." Is this really doing justice to the philosopher who proclaimed the maxim: "Act in each case so that you could wish your action to be made universal law"? It might almost seem as if Dewey were firmly determined to read his "love-of-ease" psychology into the classical tradition at any cost.

The picture that results accordingly bears a strong imprint of its author's bias. The bearers of the classical tradition were men who withdrew in haughty contempt from the scene where the real battles of mankind were fought against the blind forces of nature and the cruelties of inhuman oppression. They left their fellow men in the lurch, making a badge of spiritual superiority of what was at bottom cowardice and love of ease. An undemocratic false pride was thus engendered, and inactive fear of what life might bring forth was made the very summit of spiritual distinction. Such, in particular, is the state of mind which, in Dewey's opinion, is the core of traditional Christianity, and on this subject he is nothing short of violent. It stands for "dogmatic traditions which socially are harshly intolerant and which intellectually are institutionalized paranoic systems". Democracy and traditional Christianity are incompatible he says in *A Common Faith*:

> It is impossible to ignore the fact that historic Christianity has been committed to a separation of sheep and goats; the saved and the lost; the elect and the mass. . . . I cannot understand how any realization of the democratic ideal as a vital moral and spiritual ideal in human affairs

is possible without surrender of the conception of the basic division to which supernatural Christianity is committed.

The substitution of democratic equalitarianism for this obnoxious division between sheep and goats "would terminate the most corroding form of spiritual pride and isolation, that which divides man from man at the foundation of life's activities".

It is not too much to say that for Dewey the classical tradition is the principle of evil in modern history; its persistence is the indirect cause of all that goes wrong, including the Great War. But over against it stands a brave little band: the champions of Progressive Reason, that divinity of Deweyite humanitarianism. These are the mouthpieces of the Divine — the sheep, one might almost say, as against the goats, the elect as against the mass. Yet this, Dewey would no doubt point out, is only a provisional state of affairs, a characteristic of the present period of transition (the true "middle" ages), which will gradually be superseded by the truly modern age. Before that happy consummation, however, the Deweyites evidently have an *Interimsethik* — for the "harsh intolerance" is not all on the side of Christianity; witness Dewey's own statements on that subject.

The use of science, Dewey holds, has hitherto been one-sidedly limited to the control of physical nature; we also need scientific method in dealing with the human world, for "[modern] man has suffered the impact of an enormously enlarged control of physical energies without any corresponding ability to control himself and his own affairs". The chief obstacle to effective thought in the social realm is the tendency to substitute vague moral phrases, like the sinfulness of man, for close scrutiny of the actual nexus of cause and effect.

> The sinfulness of man, the corruption of his heart, his self-love and love of power, when referred to as causes are precisely of the same nature as was the appeal to abstract powers . . . that once prevailed in physical "science", and that operated as a chief obstacle to the generation and growth of the latter. Demons were once appealed to in order to explain bodily disease and no such thing as a strictly natural death was supposed to happen. The importation of general moral causes to explain present *social* phenomena is on the same intellectual level.

Now in one sense this is perfectly true; when confronted with specific social evils it is not enough to enunciate some moral platitude and then stop thinking about the matter. Yet here again we may ask whether Dewey does not misrepresent the classical tradition in ascribing to it such a view. The sinfulness of man is a reality, as we all of us know; every time we act contrary to what we know is right, we have ourselves created an illustration of it. More than that, there is an unaccountable waxing and waning of man's moral strength which no science has explained, but which is nevertheless very real in its social effects. But that realization of this fact should preclude a rigorous inquiry into cause and effect, carried to its full conclusions, is a misstatement of what is implied in the classical tradition. There is another reason why Dewey's critique can hardly be said to do justice to the classical tradition: moral judgements of the type referred to have almost invariably been used as judgements of value, not as causal explanations, except in the sense already explained. In fact Dewey himself writes thus in *The Public and Its Problems*: "The adulteration of knowledge [the use of science for unethical purposes] is due not to its use, but to vested bias and prejudice, to one-sidedness of outlook, to vanity, to conceit of possession and authority, to contempt and disregard of human concern in its use." Why such unexpected lapses to the level of primitive magic and superstition? Dewey would no doubt answer that the statement quoted is rather a judgement of value than an explanation of causes; for the "general moral causes" adduced stand themselves in need of causal explanation. Well and good: why not extend a little of this generosity of interpretation to similar utterances within the classical tradition?

The "new" method of controlling human affairs seems to boil down to this: we must reform social conditions, not just preach morals; "we change character from worse to better only by changing conditions". At the same time Dewey clearly means that reform of social conditions includes reform of the ideas and ideals of the social body. The preaching of morals is accordingly reintroduced under a new name, after having been contemptuously dismissed. For what else has the preaching of morals consisted of in the *real* classical tradition? Take another illustration: Dewey, in *Individualism Old and New*, criticizes those who would "form the social bond of unity and of allegiance by regeneration of the isolated individual soul". "The attempt to cultivate it [religion] first in individuals and then extend it to form an organically unified society is fantasy." This program, accordingly, Dewey discards as absurd (yet what are we to think about the historic origins of religions like Christianity and Buddhism?). But when he comes to develop his own remedy for our ills, a little later in the same book, he tells us that "individuality is inexpugnable and it is of its nature to assert itself. The first move in recovery of an integrated individual is accordingly with the individual himself." "If, in the long run, an individual remains lost, it is because he has chosen the course of easy parasitism." Where are we? Religion, says Dewey, is the flower of harmonious social relations, not a causal factor producing them; but how can he in that case attach so much importance to his own philosophic-religious program? To answer that the efficacy of his program consists in "liberating" the moral and religious potentialities of modern life from the dead weight of the classical tradition, is mere verbiage: either religion is causally efficacious or it is not. And, *nolens volens*, every philosophic-religious program has to proceed by "regenerating" the individual soul. Always we find the same failure to do justice to the classical tradition.

The metaphysic of genera and species, as Dewey very fully shows, was natural to a period when life was lived in a narrow traditional pattern and definite conventions were firmly established. Things had definite traditional uses and "meanings", and these were considered the "essential" part of phenomena, in contradistinction to irrelevant accessories. The uses of things, or men's purposes with regard to them, were thus given a metaphysical status as "true" reality within the world of multiplicity and change. Yet this was possible only so long as the uses of things remained fairly stable and men lived a definite traditional way of life. When the narrow routine of habit was broken up by economic and social changes, the "meanings" of phenomena were brought into a fluid transitional state and the "substances" of scholasticism accordingly became rather shaky. A fixed set of habits and conventions – Dewey here makes a *non sequitur* – is therefore the very essence of classicism.

Here again Babbitt and More took a radically different view. Though Dewey's account of traditional "realism" is obviously true so far as it goes (however incomplete), it has from their point of view nothing to do with the deeper and permanently valuable aspect of the classical tradition. The fallacy is the same as that revealed in the identification of "classical" ethics with a code of conventions and habits. In so far as "realism" was dependent upon some set of fixed habits and conventions, it was an irrelevant accretion to the essential thing in the classical tradition, namely the ethical dualism inherent in the affirmation of the value of "justice" as a state of mind. In More's interpretation of Plato the ethical Ideas are the only important ones; the human *telos*, or the Idea of Justice, was *the* Idea, and other meanings received ideal quality only by a kind of irradiation from it, of the type described by von Hügel:

> Thus immediately within himself does man have a continuous, uniquely vivid experience of the One and the Many, and of the necessity, difficulty, and fruitfulness of their proper organization; and from hence he will reflect them back upon the outer world, adding thus indefinitely, by means of Ethics, to the delicacy and depth of

his apprehension of such Oneness and Multiplicity as, by means of Dialectic, he has already found there.

The distinction between ethics and convention has always been upheld within the classical tradition, and reform and reorganization of the latter need not affect the former. Is there a sane person who, in principle, denies the importance of intelligent social change and readjustment? It is not the absence of this insight which has been responsible for social evils, but rather, in the *ultimate* analysis, "the sinfulness of man, the corruption of his heart". The passions of men always cloud the issues. Not only those who would loose through a reform, but also those that would gain, have a bias. Traditional wisdom – Dewey to the contrary – bids us recognize dangers from *both* sides, not only from the conservative side; ill-considered change is a danger no less than inert conservatism. It is always extraordinarily difficult to decide in specific issues just what is the reform needed. But the ideal of intelligent social reform is really no new discovery. Why, then, oppose this ideal to the classical tradition, as if they were incompatible? Referring to Babbitt's and More's humanism, Dewey writes: "To ask the individuals who suffer the consequences of the general undermining and sapping [produced by the Industrial Revolution] to put an end to the consequences by acts of personal volition is merely to profess faith in moral magic." Babbitt and More never denied the importance of general social reform; they were sane men. But their own ambition was to make the ethical ideal which is the very core of classicism – true classicism, not Dewey's *bête noire* – a vital reality to the modern élite. Success in this, they held, is a necessary condition for a sound future development of society. Why does Dewey oppose this program to intelligent social reform when obviously the two procedures are complementary?

The heart of the "classical tradition", as Babbitt and More understood it, is an alogical experience of a Higher Reality, a divine essence, present in the individual man as his deepest self, yet transcending him, timeless and non-spatial, yet present wherever "justice" is present. By emphasizing the religious, "mystical", alogical character of this experience, which they find at the heart of all deeper religion and morality, they cut loose from the intellectualism of the Western tradition, where "reason" is supposed to *know* this higher reality. Dewey's penetrating critique of intellectualism does not accordingly touch them. The organ through which this reality is experienced, they held, is not conceptual thinking, but an alogical *sensing*. To declare this experience illusory just because it is alogical, they held, is sheer rationalistic dogmatism.

Dewey, too, sees in the dualistic view of reality the essence of the classical tradition (though, as I have pointed out, he differs from Babbitt and More by reading into it his "love-of-ease" psychology).

> All philosophies of the classic type [he says in *Reconstruction in Philosophy*] have made a fixed and fundamental distinction between two realms of existence. One of these corresponds to the religious and supernatural world of popular tradition, which in its metaphysical rendering became the world of highest and ultimate reality. . . . Over against this absolute and noumenal

reality which could be apprehended only by the systematic discipline of philosophy itself stood the ordinary empirical, relatively real, phenomenal world of everyday experience. It was with this world that the practical affairs and utilities of men were connected. It was to this imperfect and perishing world that matter of fact, positivistic science referred.

This is the opposition around which the whole of Dewey's philosophy is built up. Utilitarianism, he shows, was from the start a turning away from the Higher World and an attempt to gain control over the natural forces of the "world of everyday experience". And with regard to this program Dewey is a convinced utilitarian, if ever there was one. It goes without saying that for him the experience of a higher reality is an illusory experience.

Whereas for Babbitt and More the inmost self of man is an energy working for self-limitation and, on the religious level, self-sacrifice, we find in Dewey's philosophy the expanding, conquering self of utilitarianism. Rationalism has been summed up in the phrase *je pense, donc je suis*, Rousseauistic romanticism in the phrase *je sens, donc je suis*. In Dewey we find the formula *I own, therefore I am.* Upon this, as the basic fact of his psychology, Dewey builds his utilitarian religion, which may now be summarized.

In so far as the individual can identify his "I own" with the "we own" of society, and ultimately of humanity, in so far, in other words, as he can make his own expansive self-realization socially serviceable, he communes with the Divine; for then he lives in the whole: "Within the flickering inconsequential acts of separate selves dwells a sense of the whole which claims and dignifies them. In its presence we put off mortality and live in the universal." (*Human Nature and Conduct.*) Nature is expanding; it expands in and through humanity; it realizes itself expansively and becomes clothed with constantly richer and more stable meanings through humanity. If, therefore, the individual, instead of contracting and hardening and withdrawing from life and from his fellow men in an escapist fashion, expands in and with the expansion of nature and of humanity, he lives in the whole – he is in the state of grace, one might say. Now thus to live in the whole is to live with (or rather in) socially serviceable purposes: then one's self, constituted by these purposes, coincides with the whole: one has literally put off mortality and lives in the universal expansion. But to entertain socially serviceable purposes is to entertain *rational* purposes. Intelligence in action is thus the organ of communion with the divine expansion. Here the Baconian intellectualism embraced by Dewey crowns the edifice. "Knowledge is power," said Bacon – the knowledge of humanity is the power of humanity; it is the "we own" of humanity. And in his rational purposes the individual identifies himself with the purposes of the whole. Baconian reason is thus the divine element in humanity and in the nature which expands in and through humanity. Rational purpose is active idealism – an idealism which transforms the actual into the ideal – and "it is this *active* relation between ideal and actual to which I would give the name of 'God' ". God, in short, is another name for expansion – the expansion of nature in life, of life in humanity, and of humanity in its intelligent expansion clothing nature with meanings and ideal qualities. Man's active intelligence is the supreme expansion of nature, the supremely divine. Aesthetic experience is joy in the rhythmic expansion of life.

This, I believe, is a fair summary of John Dewey's religion. It is a religion of the expanding life – expanding, above all, through the rational purposes of man, through human intelligence in action. The principle of evil is "contraction", "hardening", "withdrawal", absence of life; and this, of course, is especially evident in the classical tradition. Dewey's religion is that typical hybrid of Darwin and Plotinus with which we are so familiar nowadays. As against Dewey's monism, More and Babbitt stand for a clear-cut dualism; as against the divine expansion in all its forms from Plotinus to Bergson, they emphasize the divine contraction, the divine negation of expansion which is not, as Bergson and Dewey would have it, mere inertia or absence of life, but a higher life. It was not a Deweyite who said "I have come that ye may have life and have it more abundantly." Babbitt's and More's radical dualism makes it possible for them to see something more in the classical tradition than Dewey is able to discover there.

The two American "humanists" based their interpretation and defense of the classical tradition upon the phenomenological reality of a spiritual intuition, a sense of eternal values. Sometimes this sense of higher values comes upon man all of a sudden as he is hurried along by his habits and passions and desires; something new fills his mind for a moment; attention is transferred from a lower realm to a higher, and action ceases for a moment. The "inner check" makes itself felt in human life. A new principle, a sense of higher values, enters consciousness, and its effect within the life of impulse and action is for the time being negative: both cease for the moment as the higher awareness fills the mind. To the Christian, the sense of the reality of God may suddenly become a potent awareness: why and how he cannot tell. To the Platonist, the Idea of Justice may suddenly shine forth out of the supersensible world; an intense realization of the value of "justice" or self-mastery fills his mind. The spiritual principle sensed may be visualized imaginatively in various ways; but in itself it is a pure intuition of value, and its sole immediate effect upon the life of impulse and action is negative. Its remoter effects, however, are positive enough. For under the spell of this higher influence man asks himself the question: is what I am now doing right? Are these actions compatible with the ideal of justice? Are these actions in accordance with the will of God? The answer may be yes or no: that depends upon the deliberation that takes place as various thoughts and considerations occur. But whether the action originally intended or some other action results, the original impulse has at all events been submitted to control. The spiritual intuition thus acts as a principle of control, producing a momentary pause in action, so that thoughts and considerations further back in the mind can influence the final decision.

All of this might sound as if it were almost an automatic process, and as if man's own rôle were purely passive. Such has, in fact, been a not uncommon misinterpretation of More's phenomenology. Yet nothing could be more erroneous. The above statements are intended as a description of man's moral life of active, painful, hard self-mastery. Only what More wanted to draw attention to was the unaccountable waxing and waning of man's moral strength. Some times the spiritual intuition is a vivid reality to man, sometimes it is not; sometimes he has strength to self-mastery, sometimes he has not; and there is really nothing more to be said about that. There is an irreducible element of given-ness in the moral life. "Work out your *own* salvation with fear and trembling," said Paul, "for *it is God* which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

When the sense of eternal values makes itself felt in human life, attention is lifted from the lower plane of experience to the higher – what else is meant by saying that we become "conscious" of the higher principle? This should be especially noted, for the "attention" at work here is really something very different from attention to specific goods. The Christian suddenly attends to the religious realities; the Platonist attends to the Idea of Justice. When the spiritual intuition enters consciousness, man attends to it; or – tautologically – when man attends to it, it enters consciousness. Attention and spiritual intuition are here the same. Attention to the higher values – whether imaginatively visualized or not – is thus really synonymous with the presence of the "inner check" in consciousness. Attention to the higher values is not easy; the checking and controlling of the passions is a difficult and painful activity. "Effort of attention," as William James said, "is thus the essential phenomenon of will." Only what James failed to see is that, phenomenologically, the reality attended to is dual: eternal values on the one hand, and utilitarian values on the other. This is the precise point where More's analysis goes beyond that of James. In his introduction to the Dhammapada, Babbitt, too, agreed with James that will reveals itself in an act of attention or selection, but he added that the things attended to may be *of different orders*. Now attention to the higher order comes first ("the inner check"), and this attention presides over the choice among specific goods which takes place afterwards. Free will is thus ultimately a negative power, a power of suppression; but it is not negative save in its immediate effect upon the life of impulses, for it is also experienced as absolute good. This sense of transcendent values – of the intrinsic value of self-mastery and "justice" – is the reality that is operative in the life of strenuous self-control.

Dewey also makes active attention fundamental in morals. In *Philosophy and Civilization*, he says: "The difficulty in the way of attaining and maintaining practical wisdom is the urgency of immediate impulse and desire which swell and swell until they crowd out all thought of remote and comprehensive goods." More and Babbitt would add that the "remote and comprehensive goods" are dual: on the one hand the eternal Idea of Justice, which man should realize in his own life, on the other hand the specific goods to be achieved by a specific action. A trace of this duality is also found in Dewey; if man fails to achieve the specific goods which were the object of his action, Dewey tells us, he will at least have the satisfaction of being "an intelligent human being" – a just man, as Plato would say.

In More's and Babbitt's view, then, the sense of absolute good operates in the human mind as a check upon impulse: it causes a man to stop short and ask himself if his action or impulse is compatible with the noble ideal of justice of which he is conscious. A momentary deliberation follows as various other thoughts and impulses arise, and then action follows — maybe the action originally intended and now controlled and approved of. It may also be that the spiritual intuition recedes as soon as it came — that the check was insufficient to control passion; then passion breaks through again untested by remoter considerations. Yet man feels that this is his own fault, that it is *his* task to control his impulses — in fact, he experiences the spiritual intuition as his own free will and feels that if it is not active this is due to his own spiritual sloth. Such is the ambivalence of experience.

Paul Elmer More emphasizes that the sense of absolute good, active as an inner check, should not be confused with the choice between specific goods that is made possible by the presence of this sense of higher values. Attention to the remoter and more comprehensive specific goods is a consequence of the presence of the spiritual intuition.

> As one impulse is checked [More writes] some other impulse may come to the surface and may be permitted to pass into activity. The inner check has thus the semblance of an act of attention or choice [between specific goods. Such] attention, nevertheless, must not be confused with the inner check, which is essentially, so far as it can be expressed in rational terms, a pure inhibition, having the absence of variety and change which belong only to absolute negation.

It would have been conducive to clarity if More had brought out more clearly the fact that awareness of absolute good is itself a kind of attention.

There are, then, in human experience two opposed principles: absolute good and absolute evil; there is in human nature the spiritual intuition and *das radikale Böse*. How could these two principles meet except as radical negations of one another? How could either be defined except in terms negative of the other—*e.g.*, selfishness *versus* self-sacrifice? But through the interaction of these two opposites arises the world of relative good: the stable habits that make possible civilized human life. This dualism is not cooped up in a private individual consciousness: it expands into a cosmic dualism. Thus, in classical and mediaeval philosophy, Being, or Good, and Not-Being, or Evil, can be stated only as negations of one another. Between them there is the world of contingent being and relative good which arises somehow as a result of the interaction of the two absolute opposites. This interaction is usually conceived imaginatively, mythically, as a process of creation.

> In brief, the philosophy of dualism does not attempt, as do the metaphysical systems, to explain the coexistence of good and evil. . . . We know that there is within us a stream of impulses flowing from abyss to abyss, which we call positive evil. We know that there is also within us a negative power of pause, the inner check, which we call absolute good. The order of natural life and nature, formed so to speak by eddies in the stream, at once changing and stable, we call relative good, implying thereby that it belongs purely to neither element of our being alone, but springs from an incomprehensible relation of the two elements.

I would conclude this exposition of what for Babbitt and More is the fundamental thing in the "classical tradition" by indicating my own attitude toward their views. I see in their philosophy a *phenomenological account of a definite type of human experience*, a description of an *alogical* way of experiencing the universe. For my own part I incline to believe that this account takes us close to the heart of the "classical tradition" in all its forms. And this heart is *energy* – not, as Dewey has it, love of ease.

A wholly different problem is whether this experience should be held veridical or illusory. Dewey adopts the latter alternative on the ground that religious dualism is incompatible with science – not so much with any special conclusion of science as rather with its spirit, its manner of approach, its methods of explanation. But this is a subject that falls outside the scope of the present essay.

From the point of view I have indicated Babbitt and More wrote the most powerful body of literary criticism known to me in any language. Already in 1921, Sweden's outstanding critic and literary scholar, Professor Fredrik Böök, pointed out that "the real successors of Sainte-Beuve, Taine and Renan are to be found, not in France, but in America". The truth of this remark will gradually become apparent, however far from due recognition these two American critics may have been during their own life-time.

REVIEWS

Art, Movies, and Morals *

MORTIMER ADLER, philosopher in the tradition of Aristotle and Aquinas, and a spiritual son of Jacques Maritain, has written a masterly book on the relation of art to morality. It should be read by all *American Reviewers*, and by aestheticians and critics within and without the university, and read in its entirety, skipping neither the formal (but not in the least jejune) outlines which occupy some of its middle pages nor the notes — short essays, or substantial quotations from St. Thomas and modern Thomists: some of the shrewdest observations and most sensitive perceptions lurk in obscure corners where an indolent reviewer would scarce look for them.

Merely as a piece of sustained thinking and writing the book is impressive: like Mumford's *Technics and Civilization* it has a flow and concatention uncommon and unexpected in our hurried times and journalistic country, where volumes are habitually conceived in terms of articles sprightly, brief, and autonomous enough for preliminary publication. But its chief virtues are intellectual: its freedom alike from modernism and obscurantism, its combination of learning and insight, orthodoxy and originality, of technical information and philosophic wisdom.

The volume divides into four parts. "Poetry and

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* ART AND PRUDENCE: A STUDY IN PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY *by Mortimer J. Adler* (LONGMANS, GREEN. 686 pp. $5.00).

Politics", the first section, expounds, relates, and criticizes the theories of Plato, Aristotle, Bossuet, St. Thomas, Rousseau, and Dewey, as these thinkers, representative of Greek civilization, of Christianity, and of democracy, analyze the relation of the arts — especially of the theater — to the moral and political well-being of the State. Taking Aristotle's *Poetics* as his guide and, justly, establishing the equivalence of the movies to "popular poetry", Adler reviews, in Part II, the current charges that the movies corrupt men's — and especially children's — morals and the current defenses; he makes it clear that both positions owe ancestry to the initial pair of aestheticians and moralists, Plato and Aristotle, and that the controversy over the effects of the movies simply echoes earlier quarrels like those over the Elizabethan theater and the comedies of the Restoration.

In Part III, "Science and Prudence, Prudence and Art", we are given a digest and critique of recent sociological and psychological monographs based upon research into the effects of the movies. Adler shows the lamentable shortcomings of method and still more the naïveté of interpretation which characterize the work of many "experts" in the "social sciences". Lastly, Part IV, "Cinematics", offers a discerning analysis of cinema technic (including "montage") and a discussion of "form and matter" as they are to be distinguished in this art of "popular poetry".

The indispensable section is Part I, which I could wish separately issued for the use of classes in ethics and aesthetics. Nowhere, to my knowledge, has the opposition between the Platonic and the Aristoteleian theories of art been so ably expounded and the reconciliation (in which Aristotle wins the chief ground) so skillfully effected. The controversy centers primarily upon the question whether art is incitory or cathartic. When we see a play or read a novel, does it influence us to put into action the unruly emotions and purposes we see portrayed, or does it, rather, purge us, through contemplation, of like purposes and emotions, latent in us? Plato, who accepts the former alternative, is thinking of "philosophers", souls already well-ordered, able to discipline their passions; Aristotle, advocate of the latter, has in mind the imperfect, those whose emotions are insubordinate and overwhelm their judgement. "Art is not for the good man. It is properly the refuge of the people, because it is the poor people, alas, who are so susceptible to disorder, so weak in reason. The good man will not go to the theatre or the bull-fight, but everybody else, *that is, everybody*, will."

Art is an "imitation of life"; and a sound conception of it must equally emphasize both substantives. *Of life:* hence, the emotions aroused are analogous to those which incite to action; an *imitation:* hence, there is a shift from action to contemplation. For adults, at least, the normal response to an imaginative representation is a harmless discharge of emotions which, had they not been artificially aroused and artificially purged, might have led to harmful action. The hierarchy of the arts "corresponds to the hierarchy of needs. The principle of the series is the degree of complexity in the imitation and the degree of capacity in the spectator: the boxing match and the bull-fight for people with a burden of elementary passions and proportional intelligence; chamber music and the tragedy for people with the burden of more subtle emotions, with more refined sensitivity, and again, proportional intelligence."

The arts, furthermore, provide not only release from emotions but also, for all save perfect philosophers, a degree of contemplation. Practical morality has as its offices the restraint of the passions by religion or ethics and the harmless discharge of the passions through art; but the moral state is also promoted by inducing concern with intellectual and spiritual values; and the supra-moral state – that for which, as end, morality exists – is a state of contemplation. The ordinary man is incapable of dialectic, of any sustained intellectual exercise; he contemplates only as ideas are mediated to him through the arts. "The pleasure which men get from art is the first step away from the lusts of the flesh and toward the yearning of the spirit." The arts, therefore, perform the double service to the good life, doubly assist man in his conflict with vice – by weakening or at least interrupting the dominance of his passions and by providing him, at his own level, with impulses to contemplation instead of to action.

Some moralist critics of art have advocated the doctrine of "poetic justice" – *i.e.*, that, at the end of a fiction, good shall be exhibited as secularly triumphant and evil as slain or incarcerated. Adler remonstrates, soundly: "No more immoral doctrine could be taught. The doctrine of poetic justice is the teaching of Satan and the friends of Job. If there is any basic insight which both Greek and Christian share it is that virtue is a condition of happiness, and not of material success."

In the later sections of the book, specifically concerned with the movies, Adler exhibits remarkable balance and practical judgement, avoiding both the prudery of the reformer who rarely visits the cinema "palace" and the snobbery of the "intellectual", for whom the product of Hollywood is dismissible as "popular" or "commercial". Modern society is, to be sure, lamentably misconstructed; the ideal state would require "the abolition of profit, on the one hand, and an avoidance of collectivism on the other. [And] how different education might be, and medicine and law as well as the fine arts, in a truly distributive society." But why, in a pervasively mercantile milieu, single out the movies for special excoriation? And why identify "popular" with aesthetically worthless? Books, plays, paintings, and music are also commercially produced and distributed; and the "implication that the profit motive . . . necessarily implies badness or even absence of art is obviously nonsense. Elizabethan drama is an outstanding case in point."

There are some readers — and reviewers — from whom Adler's frequent citation of Aristotle and St. Thomas will evoke an uncritical response of enthusiasm or hostility. This is unfortunate, for *Art and Prudence* is not to be categorized — and dismissed — as "scholastic philosophy" or "obscurantism". Its author commands both background and foreground; knows, without being awed to subservience, what the masters of the past have held; and has scrutinized the sociological monographs of 1936 without forgetting the permanence of Greek and Christian thought concerning "first principles".

AUSTIN WARREN

A Christian Sociology*

PERSONS familiar with Canon Bell's previous books will know that he states issues sharply and without compromise. Such decisiveness is appropriate to a short work of the present kind. The author sets down quite simply what he conceives to be the Catholic attitude toward the basic social problems of our day; with very little argumentation, he manages at the same time to convey the essential reasonableness of this attitude, based as it is on an experienced view of human nature and a conviction of the ultimate end of man. The chain of reasoning must begin somewhere; and if they whom Father Bell calls "secularists" reject his premisses, then in one sense there can be no further discussion with them. But at least one will have made the Christian position clear by exhibiting its inner logic.

The book divides into four chapters, originally as many lectures, delivered at the School of Sociology of the Anglo-Catholic Congress and at St. Clement's Church, Philadelphia: "The Catholic Point of View", "The Catholic Looks at the State", "The Catholic Looks at the Economic Problem", "The Catholic Looks at the Church".

In his opening chapter Father Bell sets over against each other, in irreconcilable opposition, the Catholic and the secularist points of view. Protestantism he dismisses in what may seem a high-handed manner; yet his words very well reflect the present situation in the churches: "There are left only Catholic Protestants and secularist Protestants — the division goes quite across denomination lines, be it remembered — pulling and hauling in two completely opposite directions. Protestants have no social attitude peculiarly their own. Their sociology is either a mixture of Catholic sociology and secularist sociology, or else a vacillation between the two." Catholicism conceives, first, that man's end in life is to love God and share His creative activity; and second, that the attainment of this end is not within the capacity of the "natural man" — not the destined goal of immanent evolutionary development — but that it can be brought to pass only by the operation of divine grace. "It is human nature that must be changed. It can be changed, but not self-changed. . . ."

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* A CATHOLIC LOOKS AT HIS WORLD: AN APPROACH TO CHRISTIAN SOCIOLOGY *by Bernard Iddings Bell* (MOREHOUSE. 130 pp. $1.25).

As against this, secularism conceives the end of man to be temporal happiness through the possession of material goods, and as a corollary conceives man himself to be capable of securing a wide and just distribution of those goods and hence "the greatest happiness of the greatest number". This distinction is of course well drawn; but there are positions which it would be difficult to classify as either Catholic or secularistic. For instance, the Romantic view that man's end is a full and complete *experience* cannot very well be called materialistic; and a theory of society has more than once been worked out on its basis (*cf.*, most recently, S. de Madariaga's *Anarchy and Hierarchy*). Again, Fascism does not aim at the accumulation of material goods — on the part of the individual at least. It aims at the arousing of corporate loyalties which have definite spiritual value. In the end "secularism" cannot be defined as mere materialism; any attitude which puts second things first – the love of men before the love of God – is irremediably "secular", however generous and idealistic it may appear. Even Satan is said to be a "spiritual" being.

In his second chapter, the author puts forward as the Christian political ideal a theory of Guild, as opposed to State, Socialism. The Community must not be identified with the State: the latter is much narrower than the former, and exists not as the master of the people, but as their servant, to protect them in all the network of interrelationships in which they compose the Community. "The State is not the Community, but merely the police association of the Community." At the same time, it is made very clear that the contemporary identification of the State with the Community proceeds directly from that loss of all sense of community which has marked liberal democracy. Statism is the natural and exaggerated reaction from a secularist form of society in which the Community is no more than a means to the individual's welfare, and in which individuals have been permitted time and again to plunder and prostitute the Community for their own ends. Because of this "the way to combat dictatorships is not to make ourselves defenders of the sort of selfish scramble that has called itself democracy". With liberal democracy's often corrupt and always haphazard parliaments the author contrasts the syndicates and General Council of Fascist Italy. Unlike Berdyaev, he thinks that "Fascism, from a Christian point of view . . . is not nearly so bad as Bolshevism". This depends upon what one means by "bad". That Fascism "at least regards man as human", while Communism regards him as a consumer of material goods, is true; but this (as suggested above) only makes Fascism the more subtle danger, corresponding to the "spiritual sins" of an individual, while Communism corresponds to the carnal ones.

Turning to "the Economic Problem", we find a clear statement of the *moral* criteria by which the Catholic should evaluate any economic order, actual or proposed. The Catholic believes that right conduct is dynamic, creative; that spiritual growth is through asceticism; that man must be regarded as an end, not as a means; that the individual is infinitely precious to God, but that the individual becomes fully such through self-sacrifice alone; and that love is stronger than force or hate – love, though, "not in the sense of amativeness or in any sentimental sense, but in terms of the will".

An economic change, then, seems good to a Christian's eye only if it tends to make more possible and easy for human beings the living of a life of mutual fellowship in which each human being is dynamic and creative. If a proposed economic change tends to slow people down, to make them placid creatures of environment; if it deadens them; if it encourages such self-indulgence as softens moral fiber; if it magnifies things produced to a greater value than those who produce and consume; if it enslaves the individual, making him a cog in a politico-economic machine that regards itself as master of the citizens instead of as their servant and their mutual emancipator; then the Catholic must condemn it and hamper it and try to stop it, no matter at what cost.

Beside knowing these principles and applying them, however, the Catholic must know what is actually going on in the world today. According to the author, what is going on is this: the problem of production has been solved by Capitalism; and we are now engaged in solving the problem of distribution. Enough money must be got into the hands of the workers to enable them to buy the things they have produced. This cannot be done so long as large sums are paid to investors, stockholders, and other money-lenders: these people receive more money than they can spend, and hence reinvest much of it, thus "catapulting the burden". Such an analysis has surface plausibility; but it is a question whether raising the worker's wages a few cents per hour (which is all that could be accomplished by even the most violent reduction of dividends and other payments to investors) is going to stimulate consumption so enormously as to heal our economic ills.

The author makes it clear that this redistribution of purchasing power represents *what is happening* at present, rather than an account of what *would* happen from the Catholic point of view. At the same time he views it as a change which Catholics should encourage and facilitate. But the redistributing of money to buy manufactured goods cannot very well qualify as an end in itself. Men will not tend to moral improvement by being able to buy a new automobile every three, instead of every four, years; nor is a person less a wage slave because his wages are higher. Distribution of property, not distribution of the means to buy goods, should be the aim of the Christian moralist. Father Bell may believe this, of course; but he is so impressed by actualities, that he does not dare to hope for any Utopian solution of the economic problem. In the end, he thinks, the secularist social order can nowise be redeemed from "self-destruction". Even such distribution change as he has mentioned will not be accomplished without wars and dictatorships, for only so can privilege be wrested from the "once-born" man. The Catholic Christian does not really believe that his principles will triumph in this age: but his duty is to witness, to hold them high before men, and to suffer on their behalf.

The final chapter analyzes the present-day difficulties of the Church and hindrances to its effectiveness under six heads: (1) the confusion in Christian minds between the Church and the secular Community; (2) the desire of clergy and people to make the best of both worlds; (3) the dependence upon money for Church promotion; (4) the false democratization of the Church; (5) the individualizing of worship; and (6) "the division of Catholic-minded people along denominational lines that have little or no contemporary meaning". About the "reunion of the Churches" the author is pessimistic; valid union cannot be brought about on any "secondary basis" such as episcopacy, but must result from unanimity of conviction as to what the Church itself is. In all the larger Protestant denominations there are people who hold the Catholic view of the Church; and the tragedy is that these Catholic-minded people are thus artificially separated.

A Catholic Looks at his World will set before AMERICAN REVIEW readers little that they do not already know; but it summarizes much of this knowledge in an admirable way. It is an excellent book for catechumens, and should be distributed as such.

R. W. BRETALL

Peace, It's Wonderful*

IN THE heyday of the pre-Depression cynicism—before our literary men bathed in the blood of the Revolution to emerge with hope renewed—Aldous Huxley was regarded as one of the cleverest spokesmen of the temper of the times. There was some irony in this, akin to the transformation of Gulliver into a hero of the nursery, for Mr. Huxley despised and satirized the age for just those qualities he was said best to express. The futility, the selfishness, and the nasty eroticism of the emancipated modern was what he held up to scorn. His reaction against this looseness of thought and deed was instinctive rather than reasoned; he disliked the behavior of his characters, but he could, or would, not offer cogent reasons why they should behave otherwise. Yet even as early as *Crome Yellow* there were discernible behind this reaction the vague outlines of a positive attitude—one which Mr. Huxley could not quite bring himself to adopt. There might be, one gathered, an intuitive grasping of a spiritual reality behind all this tawdry facade, an appreciation of something that endowed life with value and was no mere wish. By the time of Mr. Huxley's last novel, *Eyeless in Gaza*, the nature of this reality, and the way to it, had become fairly clear, though ineffectively presented in long-winded and undramatic dialogue.

Ends and Means states directly the conclusions around which *Eyeless in Gaza* sought to build a fable. Mere intellectualism Mr. Huxley (whose favorite

* ENDS AND MEANS *by Aldous Huxley* (HARPERS. 386 pp. $3.50).

reading was once said to be any odd volume of the *Britannica*) has rejected; in surprising agreement with Irving Babbitt, he declares that "the way in which intellect is used depends upon the will". The proper end of the will, he holds, is a state of non-attachment, that is, a state in which the individual rises above all considerations of personal advantage. Such considerations, he sees, are not necessarily merely economic; the whole man may be distorted by excessive attachment to any of a number of things, art and science included. Non-attachment is the strict control of self; it is the doctrine preached by all the great sages and mystics; and it alone is the way to freedom, for "the most nearly free men have always been those who combined virtue with insight".

If the prophets and wise men have been in agreement as to the goal of the individual, they have also agreed, says Mr. Huxley, on the goal of the community of men. "In the Golden Age to which they look forward there will be liberty, peace, justice, and brotherly love." Now, since the knowing "from Isaiah to Karl Marx" have agreed upon the end of collective human effort, why is it that we are still so far short of it? Because, by and large, we have taken the wrong means to the right end. Mr. Huxley grants that we have not always sought the right ends either; but he seems to view that as the lesser of our problems: men he thinks concur so fully on what ought to be that the fault must lie in the way they have set out to achieve it. The greatest fault in their method of achievement is violence: they have again and again sought to bring about the good by evil means, while it is in the nature of evil never to engender good but only further evil.

Therefore Mr. Huxley declares himself an uncompromising pacifist, and sees no hope for our troubled world unless a sufficient body of "morally enlightened, intelligent, well-informed, and determined individuals acting in concert" do likewise. This is an appeal to ideals, it is idealism unashamed, but Mr. Huxley will not allow that it is in the least impractical. It is, he maintains, the only practical way: it is the only *good* means to good – all else, as history testifies, will bring disaster.

The first obligation of such groups (which should be small, not much above ten individuals in each unit, since in larger numbers "there will be a danger of their relapsing into the crowd's sub-human stupidity and emotionality") will be to work against war. Since individual violence is the greatest of human sins, the collective violence of war is the greatest of society's failings. War, Mr. Huxley is aware, is various in its causes (indeed he devotes a whole chapter to warning his readers against seeking too much simplicity in the explanation of anything), and besides cultivating a will to non-violence, it is necessary to remedy the other evils that lead men to think of violent means. The intolerable economic inequality of the modern world is perhaps the chief of these evils, and without much inquiry Mr. Huxley accepts socialism as its proper remedy. Naturally, though he looks toward the same ends, he does not accept the Communists' means; dedicated to blood and violence, they will only give us worse than what we have today. Fascism, naturally, is as bad for Mr. Huxley as Communism – in fact worse, for in his opinion the Fascist is wrong even as to ends and "believes that the bombardment of open towns with fire, poison, and explosives . . . is intrinsically good". The way to socialism is rather through organized small groups (whose exact nature is not made very clear) in industry, since it is the nature of small groups, when sufficiently enlightened and spiritually disciplined, to work for their own good in a manner that adds to the general good. Should the great capitalists not appreciate the value of these groups, they could be brought to heel by passive disobedience, which has proved an effective measure from Finland to India.

Mr. Huxley does not overlook the fact that all this will require a very radical change in men as they are today. But man's nature, he says, can be changed; though this is a topic on which he will confuse the reader, for he seems to reconcile in his own mind the popular anthropological conception of human nature as something very fluid indeed and the classical idea of it as something fundamentally unchanging. It scarcely serves to reinforce our faith in what the sages have told us about the nature of man to have Mr. Huxley call in as witnesses to the fact that the direction of the will may be changed those anthropologists who have decided, after prying into the secrets of some Trobriand Islanders, that there are no proper ends for the will, which is but the sport of circumstance or its own instability. (Though, having mentioned anthropologists, it must be said in justice to Mr. Huxley that he quotes approvingly a scientist who finds that chastity is a social benefit rather than a European foible.)

Finally, Mr. Huxley rests his view of human nature on a metaphysical foundation: "our metaphysical beliefs are the finally determining factor in all our actions". For the real, rather than apparent, nature of the world he turns chiefly to the mystics of both the West and the East; their testimony, he says, is that man can experience a spiritual reality. This spiritual reality is experienced as something impersonal; and that is in accord with human goodness as non-attachment — as man achieves virtue by liberation from his self, so the good toward which he moves is not determined or bounded in any way by the restrictions of personality. It will be seen that Mr. Huxley is a considerable distance from the Christian view of God, of which, in fact he is very suspicious. The way of personal devotion, he maintains, the feeling of communion with an omnipotent but personal Being, is full of snares and pitfalls; for those who are devout in this manner are prone to read too much of their private inclinations into the universe; they confuse their feelings with God's, and to establish their right to these feelings — or God's right to them — may at times even resort to violence. Why the believer in impersonal good is not likely to the same failing Mr. Huxley hardly makes clear: perhaps if one thinks of the *summum bonum* as impersonal, one escapes the frailties ordinarily found only in persons. But human psychology, the reader may incline to reflect, has subtler ways than that.

Ends and Means is a stimulating book, provocative of thought as much because of what is unacceptable as because of what is true in its thesis. Mr. Huxley's final end, his metaphysical conception of reality, is a question of theology, which there is no room to discuss here; but his recognition that our problems are, as Irving Babbitt said, ultimately philosophical and religious is a heartening thing at a time when a reverence for current fetishes together with a display of stock-in-trade iconoclasms passes for profound thought. The practical program he advances indicates he has dwelt more wisely on ends than on means; yet we may insist that the ends determine the means as much as Mr. Huxley insists upon the contrary, and see in his metaphysics the reason for his practical failure. He opposes too flatly good and evil; he dichotomizes the world in a fashion that leaves standing on one side an absolute Good, on the other an absolute Evil. But in the world good is embodied in an imperfect fashion; while creation has the potentialities of the purest good, it is not, as it exists, perfect being, and is therefore touched with evil. Every choice that man faces is not one between the two Absolutes, but between things limited by the human condition, and though the means may be attended by evil, yet the consequences of the refusal to use them may be intolerable. The perception of a "spiritual reality underlying the phenomenal world" means little to the good life if it is not accompanied by a vision of values as hierarchically arranged: which means, among other things, that the lesser good must sometimes be sacrificed for the greater. So it is that even war, when it is the only means to a just end, may be good. To say that war is never the better term of a choice forced upon man is to ignore a reality perhaps less august than Mr. Huxley's "spiritual reality", but one upon which the latter has often had to depend, in a particular time and place, for its survival.

GEOFFREY STONE

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